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Teaching English in Volunteer Education Contexts: A Reflective Study from Indonesia

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Abstract

The thesis "Teaching English in Volunteer Education Contexts: A Reflective Study from Indonesia" explores the educational context in Indonesia through the lens of a volunteering experience undertaken at the Jet Centre School of English in Yogyakarta, on the island of Java. The study aims to examine how the teaching methods and strategies can be adopted in a specific cultural context, with particular attention to the development of oral communicative skills of the pupils, especially speaking and pronunciation, and to the introduction of inductive teaching methods. The Indonesian context serves as the background for understanding both opportunities and challenges involved in running English language courses. Although English is widely taught as a foreign language, differences in access to educational resources, regional disparities, and students' different approaches to using English in everyday life can affect the learning process. The research adopts a qualitative case study approach through the implementation of a structured interview based on five main aspects and conducted with local educators. This approach enables examining the teaching experience from the participants' perspectives while considering culture-related aspects, including values, opinions, behaviours, and the social context in which the experience took place. The final analysis considers both the strengths and the limitations of volunteering experience, with particular attention to teamwork, cross-cultural awareness, communication and responsiveness to the learners' needs. It also identifies possible improvements and future perspectives for context-sensitive volunteer language education.

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I. Introduction

The importance of learning English becomes particularly clear when students are asked to use the language in real communication contexts, rather than only as a school subject. They start to understand that the language they practise in class through grammar notions, vocabulary and structures can be viewed more dynamically as a practical tool for expressing ideas and interacting with others, in a similar way to when they adapt their native language to different situations. However, the opportunity to speak English outside the classroom in a foreign language context may be limited, and this makes direct interaction particularly valuable. For this reason, language teaching also concerns the ability to communicate, participate in lessons and become more confident when using the language.

Over the years, different approaches to language teaching have increasingly emphasised communication, interaction and the active participation of learners. Communicative Language Teaching and Task-Based Language Teaching, for example, shift attention from the traditional study of grammar to the use of language for meaningful purposes, while reflective practice highlights the way teachers adapt their educational strategies during classes, tailoring lesson concepts to the context in which they operate. These perspectives become particularly interesting when language teaching takes place outside a traditional educational setting or when someone enters a classroom without being part of its usual teaching staff.

Volunteer teaching represents one of these situations. International volunteering programmes can give people the opportunity to participate in educational projects around the world and immerse themselves in cultural contexts different from their own. In language education, volunteers may support local teachers, interact with students and contribute to class activities. At the same time, volunteers become part of an educational environment that already carries its own methods, routines and relationships. This means that volunteering is not simply a trip to another country to offer help in schools. It also requires adaptation, communication and an awareness of the responsibility involved in working with students and local professionals.

Volunteer language teaching can be connected to non-formal education because it often develops alongside structured forms of education and can create additional opportunities for learning. However, international volunteering also includes challenges. Volunteers may have different levels of preparation in teaching languages and may enter an unfamiliar environment without detailed knowledge of the local educational system, cultural context and, most likely, any or

minimal proficiency in the local language. Short programmes can also create problems of continuity, while unclear division of roles among professionals may make collaboration more difficult. These aspects make volunteer teaching a complex experience in which positive intentions alone do not necessarily guarantee an effective contribution.

Indonesia provides an interesting background in which to analyse some of these issues. English is studied as a foreign language, while the opportunities to use it outside the educational settings may be limited. The country also presents important differences between regions in terms of educational opportunities, resources and access to qualified teachers. Yogyakarta is particularly relevant in this respect because it is an important centre for education and culture, with a large presence of students and a significant tourism sector. English is also commonly used to interact with international travellers and tourists.

It was within this context that I took part in a volunteer teaching programme at Jet Centre, a private language school in Yogyakarta. My role was mainly to support the professional English instructors during their lessons, assist with the classroom activities and interact with students. The classes were relatively small and involved learners of different ages. One of the most important aspects of my teaching and support activities there concerned oral communication. I noticed that communicating in English with someone from another country could create an additional opportunity for students to use a foreign language, besides being a source of great curiosity for them. However, I also became aware of difficulties connected with shyness, speaking anxiety, different levels of proficiency and my own inability to communicate in Indonesian. The issues encountered were part of this experience, and they gradually changed my understanding of the role of a volunteer. Before taking part in the programme, volunteering can be viewed in terms of what the volunteer could offer. Actually, it implies working with teachers and students. Teaching in an unfamiliar environment becomes a two-way process in which the volunteer is not only helping but also learning how to adapt to another educational and cultural environment.

The aim of this thesis is therefore to explore volunteer English language teaching through my experience at Jet Centre in Yogyakarta. The study considers the teaching practices and classroom interactions that characterised my participation, the challenges and opportunities that emerged during the volunteering period and the way in which the local teachers perceived my contribution. The main tool I adopted to explore these aspects was the use of semi-structured interviews conducted with the local teachers at the school. At the same time, the thesis examines some of the

wider strengths and weaknesses of volunteer teaching and reflects on how programmes of this kind could be better organised in the future.

The thesis is divided into four chapters. Chapter One represents the theoretical background of second and foreign language teaching, with particular emphasis on Communicative Language Teaching, Task-Based Language Teaching, Reflective Practice and Teacher Development. Chapter Two focuses on volunteer language teaching within formal and non-formal education, also considering ethical, pedagogical and practical issues. Chapter Three introduces the Indonesian context, Yogyakarta and Jet Centre, and provides an overview of the teaching practices observed during the volunteering experience. Chapter Four presents the findings from the semi-structured interviews and personal observations, comparing different perspectives and discussing strengths, limitations and possible future developments of volunteer language teaching.

Overall, the thesis approaches volunteer language teaching as a complex educational experience. Rather than assuming that volunteering is necessarily positive or effective, the study explores how its contribution may depend on different factors such as preparation, collaboration, and adaptation to the local context.

II. Chapter 1 – L2 and FL Teaching: A Theoretical Perspective

This chapter provides a theoretical perspective of L2 or second language and FL or foreign language didactics. It goes through the English Language didactics and teaching to underline the importance of communicative, task-based, and reflective perspectives. These perspectives are relevant for volunteering teaching contexts, where the environment, the constraints, and the delivery of classes differ from the traditional education settings. By outlining the main principles of L2 and FL learning, this chapter establishes the pedagogical lens through which the teaching practices described in later chapters are analysed.

The first chapter analyses the L2 and FL teaching and learning approaches (1.1) and it also delves into the methodologies of these didactics. It then moves to Communicative Language Teaching (1.2), Task-Based Language Teaching (1.3), and it concludes with Reflective Practice and Teacher Development (1.4). This section, furthermore, focuses on the importance of teaching English as L2 or FL, considering the relevance of such type of education, and the most appropriate methods and practices currently applied. Most importantly, it shed a light on both formal, academical, and non-formal settings.

When classes are shaped by a heterogeneous group of learners, the limitations and challenges of traditional methods are inevitably tested. The role of the teacher itself has to adapt to changing circumstances in order to meet the students' learning needs, while equipping them with solid knowledge and tools.

2.1 Second and Foreign Language Learning

In the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), a distinction is commonly made between second language (L2) and foreign language (FL) learning, although the two concepts also share important points of convergence. Both L2 and FL refer to the acquisition of a language other than the learner's first language (L1). However, they differ primarily in terms of learning context and degree of exposure to the target language. According to the British linguist and expert Rod Ellis (1997), second language acquisition concerns the process through which individuals learn an additional language, either in classroom settings or in naturalistic environments. In academic

studies, the term “second language” generally denotes a language learned in a context where it is widely used within the surrounding community, providing learners with frequent exposure and opportunities for authentic communication and interaction beyond the classroom.

By contrast, foreign language learning refers to the acquisition of a language that is not commonly spoken in the learner’s immediate environment and is, therefore, absent from daily practice. Ellis (1997) defines FL contexts as those in which the exposure to target language is limited to classroom and formal environment only. While the two approaches share similar cognitive processes and are often addressed within the same theoretical SLA frameworks research, they are grounded in different choices and objectives of learning (Ellis, 1997, p.3).

It is possible to underline some differences between L2 and FL, as the experienced professor Saville-Troike (2012, p.4) argued: “A foreign language is one which is not widely used in the learners’ immediate social context, while a second language is one that is used for communication in the surrounding society”. This explanation shows the different acquisition and the different methods and environments to approach either one or the other language acquisition.

When it comes to school environments the distinction is even more visible: “In foreign language classrooms, learners often have limited exposure to the target language and few opportunities to use it outside the classroom, whereas second language learners typically encounter the language both inside and outside school” (Lightbown & Spada, 2013, p.6). Accordingly, students or learners in a second language school setting have more opportunities to practice the language. This means that learners are exposed to a variety of inputs including interactions within the family and domestic context, which would enhance their experience as well as improve their results. On the contrary, students in foreign language settings have fewer opportunities to practice the language outside the classroom environment. Therefore, missing a lesson means zeroing the exposure for that day or week. Potentially, the only moment other than the one scheduled with the teacher is represented by the time spent doing the homework.

The two teaching approaches and methodologies share the same patterns: for traditional approaches to language teaching, grammatical competence is prioritized and, as Richards and Rodgers (2001, p.6) claim, it was “the foundation of overall language proficiency. Grammar was considered something that could be learned through explicit instruction, repetitive practice, and drilling, typically following a deductive approach in which students are first presented with rules and then asked to apply them”.

There are some different and alternative ways to teach a FL: the Presentation, Practice and Production; the Grammar-Translation Method; the Direct Method; the Audio-Lingual method; the Total Physical Response; the Suggestopedia method and the Silent Way. The Presentation, Practice and Production (PPP) method consists of three fundamental steps. The "presentation" represents the introduction to a lesson, and it conveys the creation of a realistic situation with the target language as language to be learned in order to accomplish the task. Follows the "Practice", which can be considered mechanical since it requires a series of drills and repetitive exercises to move to more demanding procedures such as information gap activities, dialog creation, and controlled role-plays. Finally, the "Production" as the third and last part of the model which engages learners to perform their competences and use the language learned.

The second approach is the Grammar-Translation Method. It follows a deductive structure oriented to learning the language and to reading its literature. For this reason, reading and writing are the major focus with little or no systematic attention to speaking and listening. The Direct Method originally comes from Europe, from the 1800s and it is still used today. The instruction in the classroom is exclusively in the target language and the vocabulary taught is everyday vocabulary with an important emphasis on correct pronunciation and grammar. Therefore, it is inductive and input-based, challenging the students to focus and interact exclusively in the chosen language. On the other hand, with the Audio-Lingual Method dialogues and drills are applied in classroom practices. When the Total Physical Response is implemented, imperative drills are enforced to elicit physical actions and activities from the learner. According to Suggestopedia method, the atmosphere and the physical surroundings are key factors, including art and music, to ensure that all students feel relaxed and confident in the classroom setting. Finally, "the Silent Way is based on the premise that the teacher should be silent as much as possible in the classroom and the learner should be encouraged to think through and verbally produce, independently, as many solicited language utterances as possible". (Richards and Rodgers, 2001, p.81). Nonetheless, the authors believe that the "age of 'Language Teaching Methods' […] is now over, and that is not only possible but desirable to conceive of methodology with no methods in mind" (Richards and Rodgers, 2001, p.244).

In order to teach a foreign language, approaches – rather than methods – prove to be helpful. The distinction between approach and method can be described as Richards and Rodgers wrote (2001, p.19): "A method refers to a specific instructional design or system based on a particular theory of language and of language learning. It contains detailed specifications of content, roles of

teachers, and learners, and of teaching procedures and techniques. It is relatively fixed in time and there is generally little scope for individual interpretation. Methods are learned through training. The teacher's role is to follow the method and apply it precisely according to the rules." The term approach is for the purpose of this research considered as "a core set of theories and beliefs about the nature of language, of language learning, and a derived set of principles for teaching a language". Interpretation is quintessential since "they can be revised and updated over time as new theories and new practices emerge" (Richards and Rodgers, 2001, p.19-20).

These anti-method proposals can thus be considered "approaches", as detailed below. The most implemented ones are: Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT).

2.2 Communicative Language Teaching

The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) developed in the 1960s and 1970s in Europe, especially in the United Kingdom, as a response to the limits of the obsolete traditional grammar methods. To analyse the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) we have to consider some factors. On one hand, there is the fall of grammatical traditional methods; on the other, we see a rise of a more communicative and language-oriented method that can satisfy the communication desire and necessity of learners. As Richards (2006, p.2) clearly pointed out, taking into account the shifting of the dominant language due to globalisation, "the ever-growing need for good communication skills in English has created a huge demand for English teaching around the world. Millions of people today want to improve their command of English". The job market, for any given sector, requires increasing levels of English proficiency. Consequently, in order to meet such expectations, teaching methodologies had to evolve and adapt, incorporating the use of technologies, and, where appropriate, distant learning. The development of such changes can be traced in the decades prior the Globalisation:

> In the 1970s, a reaction to traditional language teaching approaches began and soon spread around the world as older methods such as Audiolingualism and Situational Language Teaching fell out of fashion. The centrality of grammar in language teaching and learning was questioned, since it was argued that language ability involved much more than grammatical competence. While grammatical competence was needed to produce

> grammatically correct sentences, attention shifted to the knowledge and skills needed to use grammar and other aspects of language appropriately for different communicative purposes such as making requests, giving advice, making suggestions, describing wishes and needs, and so on. What was needed in order to use language communicatively was communicative competence (Richards, 2006, p.6).

As detailed above, teaching started to become more flexible in order to meet daily and business-related needs. As an example, specific courses were created and the teaching itself was compartmentalised into: Conversation, Business, Grammar, and testing-oriented English.

Without shadowing grammatical competence, predominant attention was given to communication skills, structuring courses, lessons, and materials towards practical working knowledge. To this end, Communicative Language Teaching disrupts with the traditional lesson design employed before. As Richards (2006, p.8) highlights: "with CLT began a movement away from traditional lesson formats where the focus was on mastery of different items of grammar and practice through controlled activities such as memorization of dialogs and drills, and toward the use of pair work activities, role plays, group work activities and project work".

In addition, the roles of teachers and students changed: students are asked to be active participants in the classroom, and teachers turn into facilitators and monitors to ensure the perfect environment for each person to take part in activities and to feel motivated. The main shift can be observed pertains the assigned activities. Challenging their "comfort-zone", teachers requested students to interact among themselves through cooperative activities that required peer listening and pair tasks, which resulted in an increased responsibility for the students, now directly in charge of their progress (Richards, 2006).

Different types of CLT developed mainly through the 70s and throughout the 80s as well. Soon appeared, for instance, English for Specific Purposes, that privileged context-related vocabulary over generalised lessons about grammar rules "in order to determine the kinds of communication learners would need to master if they were in specific occupational or educational roles and the language features of particular settings" (Richards, 2006, p.20). In support of this approach, it is useful to consider the Ten Core Assumptions of Current Communicative Language Teaching that state the value of the CLT (Richards, 2006). They have been gathered and published only in 2006 by the linguist and the language teaching expert Jack C. Richards in the book titled *Communicative Language Teaching Today*. The first (1) assumption highlights how interaction

and meaningful communication support the learning process. Tasks and exercises (2) are crucial "opportunities for students to negotiate meaning, expand their language resources, notice how language is used, and take part in meaningful interpersonal exchange (Richards, 2006, p.14). When lessons are based on what is considered to be "relevant, purposeful, interesting, and engaging", learners are stimulated to interact through meaningful communication (3). Therefore, the latter shall be seen as a holistic process deriving from a variety of techniques and skills put into practice (4). In addition, the approach is inductive, rather than deductive: it is starting from specific activities that the bigger picture of language analysis and reflection stems (5). The sixth (6) assumption incorporates and gives spaces to mistake-making; under this lens, the learning process requires different stages and the ability to develop attention to detail and to reduce errors as much as possible. It is clear that, the classroom or group learn at a different pace, presenting their own necessities, while navigating such process (7). As a result, progress can be seen as the "use of effective learning and communication strategies" (8). Under these circumstances, the teacher no longer explains a set of rules, rather is expected to guide the students ensuring a safe environment in which students have the space for learning and reflecting, as well as practicing what acquired (9). Finally, collaboration and sharing are key elements of the learning process, since the classroom is viewed as a community in itself (10).

Contemporary approaches to language teaching have been shaped by implementation throughout the years and have consequently changed in many aspects. Jacobs and Farrell (2003) identify eight major changes concerning the learner autonomy, the social nature of learning, curricular integration, focus on meaning, diversity, thinking skills, alternative assessment, and teachers as co-learners. The first shift involved the increased degree of choices that students can now make with regards to the content and processes of their learning, including but not limited to the size of the groups and the kind of self-assessment (1). Cooperative learning became a key feature, since learning is now understood as a group activity looking at its social component (2). Learning a language transcends the barriers of a single subject, to be incorporated within curricular activities, this way fluency is mastered through different types of activities that can be carried out outside of the classroom environment (3). The focus shifted towards meaning, considered as "the driving force of learning". Activities are geared on the exploration of meaning in all its nuances (4). Based on the assumption that "learners learn in different ways and have different strengths", the teacher has to adjust and adapt ensuring that the students are able to recognise their development and related use of strategies (5). The thinking process saw consistent changes: students are not required to think during the learning of a language only. On the opposite, learning a language is

a chance to consolidate critical and creative thinking equipping the learner with skills that can be used beyond the classroom (6). Taking into consideration the changes described above, it is understood that also the assessment system underwent a transition from multiple-choice to a variety of testing methods that would provide a clear understanding of the progress made (or the lack of it) in each sphere of learning a second language (7). Lastly, the teachers are invested in the learning process together with the students, in order to meet their demands further research and exploration of different approaches is expected (8).

One of the major experts on Communicative Language Teaching, Sandra J. Savignon, who researched tirelessly to ensure that the studies on learning a second language are not only considered as international, but also recognise the international and diverse need for finding appropriate courses, explains that: "Communicative language teaching (CLT) has become a term for methods and curricula that embrace both the goals and the processes of classroom learning, for teaching programme that views competence in terms of social interaction and look further language acquisition research to account for its development" (Savignon, 1991, cited in Richards, 2006, p.261). In addition, she uncovered how the word "communicative", employed in the curricula shaped by functional-notional approaches, was key to the establishment of the movement of Language for Specific Purposes (LSP), which originated in the 70s. Embracing LSP meant a clear shift in teaching but also learning. Indeed, students have to tap not just on their language skills, but they must incorporate and build their background knowledge (Grapin, 2017). This is made evident by Grapin (2017, p.4) example: "In pitching a new product to potential clients, a business professional may draw on her knowledge of Spanish as well as her knowledge of marketing, sales, and statistics".

Savignon explored language teaching from different fields of research and noticed how "not long ago, when American structuralist linguistics and behaviourist psychology were the prevailing influences in language teaching methods and materials, second/foreign language teachers talked about communication in terms of language skills, seen to be four: listening, speaking, reading, and writing" (Savignon, 1991, cited in Richards, 2006, p.261). However, while this division is widely implemented for any given language studied by non-native users, it falls short to the point that the inadequacy of a four skills model of language use is now recognised. Nowadays, Savignon and her studies have been critically reassessed highlighting some limitations. Scholars such as Jack C. Richards (2006) have considered an evolution of the method called "Post-CLT", to re-elaborate and accommodate the challenges that emerged.

During a previous research project at the University of Illinois, Savignon (1972) used the term "communicative competence" that reflects learners' skills to interact with other speakers while learning and considered to be separated from the progress they are likely to make and that can be measured through tests focused on grammar rules and use. The term communicative was used to describe programs that used a functional-notional syllabus based on needs assessment, and the language for specific purposes (LSP) movement was launched (Savignon, 1991).

Taking risks to speak up, more than memorise and repeat grammar rules, has been stressed and encouraged throughout the years. In this regard, the role of the teacher is to enable students to critically think and, therefore, speak in a personal and creative way, avoiding as much as possible to memorise content. To demonstrate this claim, Savignon (1991) compared the test results of two groups of students that followed different teaching styles. The ones that were exposed to CLT had similar results to the group that followed traditional classes. It is important to notice that, when looking at the results for communicative tasks, the students from the CLT group had much better scores. This study shows that a communicative approach guarantees solid knowledge and understanding of the language and of how to use it independently.

The importance of politics and multicultural view of the world itself are important and key points for a learner to understand their knowledge of the world and of society related to the language learned. As Savignon (1991, p.265) argued "central to CLT is the understanding of language learning as both an educational and a political issue. Language teaching is inextricably tied to language policy. Viewed from a multicultural intranational as well as international perspective, diverse sociopolitical contexts mandate not only a diverse set of language learning goals, but a diverse set of teaching strategies".

According to this view, communication is a pillar of learning, and it requires mutual understanding and willingness to engage in what Savignon (1991) calls "the negotiation of meaning" defined as the situation in which a learner who is not sure or lacked some information in the conversation, asks for clarification. This can help for the comprehension of the input, for an active learning in the conversation and it helps also to build a better communicative skill. Grammar, nonetheless, is an important part of the overall learning and acquisition procedure, even if in the CLT method emphasizes the speaking part. Savignon (1991, p.267) said:

> In an effort to represent a distinction between meaning and form in oral expression, some methodologists have made use of the terms fluency and accuracy. This dichotomy is

> misleading, however, on at least two counts. It suggests that the form of a message is somehow unrelated to its meaning, and then implicitly proposes an absolute grammatical norm for learners. Accuracy in this instance is measured in terms of discrete features of phonology, morphology, and syntax, and thus fails to take into account the context-relevant, collaborative nature of self-expression. Fluency, on the other hand, suggests speed or ease of self-expression, which may or may not enhance communicative effectiveness.

She gave a precise distinction between fluency and accuracy, showing also that the first one does not mean effectiveness itself, but it is only measured by speed or ease of self-expression or rhetoric.

Usually, for teaching methods, for any given subject or language, a cyclical process can be observed. Firstly, to respond to the shortcomings of a present method, that no longer responds to the teaching and learning needs, a new method is proposed. If accepted, especially if validated by academia, it is adopted by schools and institutions. After years of practice and experience, it can be better studied, compared, and, of course, criticised. This last step is important because it can improve the method, lead to some changes, or substitute it with a new method so that the circle is complete, and a new method can undergo through the same stages. Naturally, CLT experienced all the steps mentioned above. At the beginning, CTL was born to respond to the needs of developing language skills that were practical and easily used by the students in their daily and professional life. Savignon (1991, p.266) summarised the development cycle of CLT as follows: "after its appearance in the 1970s and spread in the 1980s, the early 1990s witnessed a growing dissatisfaction with several aspects of CLT, with some language professionals calling for certain reforms and suggesting changes. Much of the original criticism, and the consequent research that was aimed at offering improvements, was related to two main issues: (a) the linguistic content base of CLT and (b) the pedagogical treatment of linguistic forms in CLT". With the goal of equipping students with the necessary tools to navigate conversations in real life, specific methodologies and programmes where designed and implemented. As explained, they were born to compensate for the rigid structure of the previous methods and to support this new approach with solid guidelines.

It was expected that this new approach received criticism. Among the scholars who analysed the shortcomings is Schmidt, who in 1991, argued that "a general principle of CLT is that language learners gain linguistic form by seeking situational meaning, that is, the linguistic form is learned incidentally rather than as a result of focusing directly on linguistic form" (Schmidt, 1991, p.312).

However, this argument from CLT is not in accordance with the principles of cognitive psychology. Schmidt (1991) suggests instead that for learning to take place efficiently the learner must pay attention to the learning objective and must then practice the objective so that it changes from part of controlled process to part of an automatic process.

The British professor, Henry Widdowson, who also taught Literature at the University of Indonesia, explain that mastering communicative skills pertains to being able to create phrases using grammar rules in order to express new ideas according to any situation in which students find themselves. He (Widdowson, 1989, as cited in Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, & Thurrell, 1997, p. 145) clearly shows how "it is much more a matter of knowing a stock of partially pre-assembled patterns, formulaic frameworks, and a kit of rules, so to speak, and being able to apply the rules to make whatever adjustments are necessary according to contextual standards".

2.3 Task-Based Language Teaching

Two different and similar approaches to achieve the goal of Communicative Language Teaching are Content-Based Language Teaching and the Task-based Language Teaching. Both developed between the 1970s and the 1990s and still widely used today.

The first one considers "communication" as a process that starts with the interaction between the learner and users of the chosen language (1); it is followed by the collaborative creation of meaning (2); creating meaningful and purposeful interaction through language (3); negotiation of meaning as the learner and his or her interlocutor arrive at understanding (4); learning through attending to the feedback learners get when they use the language (5); paying attention to the language one hears (the input) and trying to incorporate new forms into one's developing communicative competence (6); Trying out and experimenting with different ways of saying things (7), as Richards, 2006 stated.

The second approach, Task-Based Teaching or Task-Based Instruction (TBI) gives special attention to the classroom environment and processes. Scholars such Richards and Ellis gave a great apport to these methods. As illustrated by Richards (2006, p.30):

> the claim is that language learning will result from creating the right kinds of interactional processes in the classroom, and the best way to create these is to use specially designed instructional tasks. Rather than employ a conventional syllabus, particularly a grammar-based one, advocates of TBI argue that grammar and other dimensions of communicative competence can be developed as a by-product of engaging learners in interactive tasks. Of course, most teachers make use of different kinds of tasks as part of their regular teaching. Task-based instruction, however, makes strong claims for the use of tasks and sees them as the primary unit to be used, both in planning teaching (i.e., in developing a syllabus) and also in classroom teaching.

At the same time, Richards (2006) is also critical since he considers it to be a problem that TBI favours classroom processes over learning outcomes. He gives the example of examination targets, and he argues that this methodology falls short in providing with specific and comprehensive guidelines with regards to specific language needs. In addition, he believes that adoption on a large scale might not be possible. Similarly, to the other analysed methods, TBI presents its own difficulties, complications, and limits. Joining Richards concerns is Ellis (2003), one of the main applied linguistic scholars, especially when it comes to second language acquisition and language didactics, he argues that with a big number of students, pared with short time allocated for a given lesson, and taking into consideration the importance that has to be given to form and accuracy in order to successfully pass exams, it might be fitting to employ TBI.

Since task-based lessons require time from the completion, through the planning and the feedback, it can be difficult sometimes to do everything within the school times allocated in the school schedule. Indeed, large classes can cause problems and be challenging to have conversations and give feedback *ad personam*. Furthermore, another problematic issue can be the normal and exam-oriented educational systems. Despite these critical aspects, Task-Based Language Teaching can be successful and considered a valid alternative. Supporting this claim is Ellis (2003, p.30) that notices how “there is now a substantial body of research showing that task-based language teaching can promote both fluency and accuracy when it is appropriately implemented”. As explained by the quote and by the features presented, this approach, much like the others, is being shaped by its implementation and the feedback it receives in the classroom environment.

2.4 Reflective Practice and Teacher Development

The last two approaches taken into consideration are Reflective Practice and Teacher Development. They are key components of the learning process. The university professor Donald A. Schön articulated for the first time the concept of reflective learning, understanding how the "reflective practice involves thoughtfully considering one's own experiences in applying knowledge to practice while being coached by professionals in the discipline" (Schön, 1987, p.22).

Indeed, it is from the late 80s and throughout the 90s that the academic focus shifted towards considering this introspective element as an integral part of studying any given subject, including a foreign language. Reflective practice originates from Schön's critique of technical rationality and his view of professional knowledge as dynamic and context dependent. As he argues, the learner is seen as a "practitioner", as someone who can digest the notions and information received through repetitions, and that can critically navigate the topic explored. By definition, students are, under this lens, considered as skilled and not just passive receivers (Schön, 1983).

In the book *The Reflective Practitioner*, the author illustrates the figure of the practitioner as someone who "allows himself to experience surprise, puzzlement, or confusion in a situation which he finds uncertain or unique, and he reflects on the phenomenon before him and on the prior understandings which have been implicit in his behaviour" (Schön, 1983, p.68). The key concept is the so-called "reflection-in-action" explained as "the kind of reflection that occurs while we are doing something" (Schön, 1983, p.54). It refers to the process of thinking about and adjusting one's actions while that very action is on-going, and, therefore, to be concluded only after such critical thinking as taken place. This type of reflection occurs when professionals encounter uncertainty or surprise and are required to make on-the-spot decisions. Through "reflection-in-action", practitioners actively reinterpret the situation and modify their behaviour without interrupting the activity itself.

In teaching environments, this process can be observed when teachers adapt their educational strategies during a lesson, tailoring their instructions in order to elicit coral and individual reflections. For example, a language teacher may notice that students are struggling with a task and decide to simplify instructions, providing additional examples, or changing the activity so as to safeguard and maintain both engagement and comprehension. This demonstrates that teaching

is not merely the implementation of pre-learned and pre-planned techniques, but rather a dynamic and responsive practice that requires continuous professional judgement and flexibility.

On the other hand, teacher development in the language context is paramount to respond to ever evolving and complex school setting. First at all, it is important to focus on two different goals pertaining to teachers' education: training and development. The first includes the "activities directly focused on a teacher's present responsibilities and is typically aimed at short-term and immediate goals", as explained by Richards and Farrell in 2005 (p.14). More specifically, the two above-mentioned scholars, investigated the context of a secondary school in Malaysia, clarifying an important distinction between teacher training and development. The first concept is defined as "trying out new strategies in the classroom, usually with supervisor, and monitoring and getting feedback from others on one's practice. The content of training is usually determined by experts and is often available in standard training formats or through prescriptions in methodology books" (Richards and Farrell, 2005, p3).

Conversely, a different discourse can be made for Teacher Development: "Development generally refers to general growth not focused on a specific job. It serves a longer-term goal and seeks to facilitate growth of teachers' understanding of teaching and of themselves as teachers. It often involves examining different dimensions of a teacher's practice as a basis for reflective review and can hence be seen as "bottom-up" (Richards and Farrell, 2005, p.4). Six are the core examples of goals from the teacher's development perspective. They are not limited to strictly text-based traditional lessons' model, rather they require empathy, openness, and flexibility for every group of students, and within them for each class. The first goal requires the teacher to shift their perspective into comprehending the different phases of learning a second language. The second focuses on the importance of adapting and morphing one's roles to tailor it to the needs of any given classroom. It follows the goal about decision-making, and, therefore, determining the power dynamics in the educational setting; this can include a different degree of the participation and ownership expected from the student. After having focused on understanding, the scope is to constantly and periodically allocate time to review those frameworks, paradigms, and methodologies that are implemented by a teacher. Linked to the latter is the knowledge and critical thinking directed towards the different styles of teaching explored. Finally, considering students' feedback gathered during and after any assigned task is a key step for this role that includes also active listening and mentoring.

There are many challenges that teachers have to face including unlearning methodologies acquired in past studies, that are likely to be replaced by growing, new, and more attentive strategies. Surely, the teachers as much as the students' background play a key role in forming the classroom environment. As Simon Borg (2006, p.282) says: "language teacher development is a complex and ongoing process influenced by teachers' beliefs, prior experiences, and the institutional contexts in which they work". It is evident that the role of the teacher has become more complex and demanding throughout the last decades. According to Johnson (2009, p.16), an important figure in teacher education and applied linguistic, "one of the main challenges in language teacher development lies in bridging the gap between theoretical preparation and classroom practice". More specifically, the challenges faced by language teachers emphasize that their development is an ongoing process influenced by reflection and context, rather than a single moment of professional training, hence requiring continuous learning in order to meet in the best possible way their students' needs, accompanying them in their personal and educational journey.

III. Chapter 2 – Language Teaching in Volunteer Contexts

For the last decades an outstanding rise of Volunteer projects and initiatives all over the world took place. As a consequence, it opened a new way to help and give significant contribution to a cause therefore, enhancing the overall educational levels for local communities and countries. Websites such as Workaway (www.workaway.info) and Worldpackers (www.worldpackers.com) have created an opportunity for young people and travellers to volunteer in also all sorts of activities, including teaching, in exchange of accommodation and food. Volunteering, indeed, has always been playing a crucial role in education.

In this chapter, volunteering for teaching a second language is looked through the lens of formal and non-formal educational contexts (see 2.1). Subsequently, ethical and pedagogical issues are taken into account with special reference to the environments involving children and adolescents since for being minors they might be exposed to risks and require safeguarding. It follows an analysis of the specific type of non-remunerated activities focus on teaching English and, attention is dedicated to low resource contexts.

3.1 Formal, Non-Formal, and Informal Education: Definitions and Different Implementations

According to the definition given by the European Commission in 2004, the first concept pertains to the: “learning that occurs in an organized and structured context (in a school/training centre or on the job) and is explicitly designated as learning (in terms of objectives, time or learning support). Formal learning is intentional from the learner’s point of view. It typically leads to certification” (CEDEFOP, 2008). When minors are involved, such intentionality refers to the family since, especially if primary, education is mandatory and regulated through the Ministry of Education in each respective country, as prescribed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights agreed by the United Nations on 10 December 1948. Similar is the definition given by UNESCO in 2006, which agrees with intentionality and organized structured environment, providing with some commonly understood settings such as pre-school, primary and secondary school, technical

colleges and university, in-company training. Notwithstanding the national differences in terms of year duration and number of grades, such division can be observed in most countries, if not all.

On the other hand, the EU Commission considers as non-formal learning the approach that is: "embedded in planned activities not explicitly designated as learning (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support), but which contain an important learning element. Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view. It typically does not lead to certification" (CEDEFOP, 2008). This form of learning is usually carried out by private institutions, non-governmental organisations, and faith-based initiatives.

Furthermore, UNESCO (2006) shades a light on the intrinsic nature of this type of education as taking place outside formal institutions and "responding to education needs for persons of all ages. The purpose of NFE (Non-Formal Education) is to provide alternative learning opportunities for those who do not have access to formal schooling or need specific life skills and knowledge to overcome different obstacles. Non-formal learning is also intentional from the learner's point of view, as opposed to incidental or random types of learning". It shows how, in some cases in which the public system falls short, this form is the only education available and, therefore, quintessential.

Nonetheless, it shall not be confused with informal learning, which is defined as: "resulting from daily work-related, family or leisure activities. It is not organized or structured (in terms of objectives, time or learning support). Informal learning is in most cases unintentional from the learner's perspective. It typically does not lead to certification" (CEDEFOP, 2008, p.93). By this, the Commission considers all those opportunities turn into a turning lesson throughout the life span. Complementing these features is the "continuously and incidentally [process] for each individual, outside [of both] the organized situation of formal or non-formal education" (European Commission, 2004, p.8).

The European Commission in 2000 differentiated among formal learning as taking place in "education and training institutions, leading to recognized diplomas and qualifications"; non-formal learning which "does not typically lead to formalised certificates (…) through the activities of civil society organizations and groups (such as in youth organisations, trade unions and political parties). It can also be provided through organisations or services that have been set up to complement formal systems (such as arts, music and sports classes or private tutoring to prepare for examinations)". Finally, informal learning is understood as "a natural accompaniment to

everyday life. Unlike formal and non-formal learning, informal learning is not necessarily intentional learning, and so may well not be recognised even by individuals themselves as contributing to their knowledge" (European Commission, 2000, p.8).

The best way to explain informal and incidental learning is by contrasting them with formal learning, and that is what Marsick and Watkins (1990) did:

> Formal learning is typically institutionally sponsored, classroom-based, and highly structured. Informal learning, a category that includes incidental learning, may occur in institutions, but it is not typically classroom-based or highly structured, and control of learning rests primarily in the hands of the learners. […] Informal learning can be deliberately encouraged by an organisation or it can take place despite an environment not highly conducive to learning. Incidental learning, on the other hand, almost always takes place although people are not always conscious of it (Marsick and Watkins, 1990, p.12).

Analysing the study carried out by Beixi Li from the University of Georgia (U.S.A.) in 2020 called "Building Intercultural Maturity: Informal and Incidental Learning among Volunteers in Adult ESL Contexts", informal and incidental learning are the leading ways through which adult ESL teachers acquire their knowledge and expertise. Another important finding carried out by Beixi Li shows that less experienced teachers are more likely to engage in informal or incidental learning activities compared to more experienced colleagues.

Furthermore, Adela Bradea, a famous Romanian academic who specialized in teacher training, volunteering, and non-formal education, in the paper "Volunteering as a Component of Non-Formal Education" (2022) stated that non-formal education is much more flexible and open in relation to students' interests and possibilities. Whether considering formal, non-formal, or informal education, new skills, especially tech-related ones, are required by the job market. Education no longer provides with understanding of a said subject, it covers a variety of tools that enable the knowledge acquired to transcend discipline borders and to be transferable. By doing so, elements of IT, language, and history are embedded into the study of Biology, to give an example. On the other hand, soft skills such as flexibility, resilience, cooperation, and teamwork are key not only within the educational sector but also equip workers for any given job position. These fundamental skills can be gained outside the formal learning environment through volunteering experiences.

The Council Recommendation highlights that each EU citizen should be equipped with the so-called "abilities to reflect upon oneself, effectively manage time and information, work with others in a constructive way, remain resilient and manage one's own learning and career" (European Union, 2018). It is important to notice that such abilities can be fostered through non-formal education; and that the combination of the two types of learning is instrumental in accelerating this process. Volunteering is another component of non-formal education and learning "whose beneficial effects on health outcomes have been well documented" in terms of improved mental and physical health, including self-esteem and happiness. These benefits are extended to all the actors involved, especially the teachers. Experiencing the teaching role through volunteering experiences enable core capabilities comprising leadership skills (European Commission, 2020).

Overall, comparing the characteristics of formal education with non-formal and informal we can see that formal education is characterized by a clearly and pre-established definition of roles that typically creates a hierarchy between the person or group in charge of selecting and transferring the knowledge through a specific amount of time that constitutes the lesson. The learning process is usually assessed through tests and/or exams.

The definition of non-formal education, precisely for referring to a kind of learning that is less structured, opens to different understandings as exemplified in *Nonformal Education NFE Manual* (2004): "some say that NFE is any out-of-school learning, others stress that participants need to design their own learning activities, while others say that non-formal teaching methods can be incorporated into all learning" (Peace Corps, 2004, p.5). More than just a type of learning, NFE is considered by its practitioners as a stand-alone approach to education since it shifts the power dynamics making space for co-construction and co-design of the curriculum content and distribution. As noted by Peace Corps (2004, p.8) "NFE is an approach to education that can be used with adults, youth, or children, within the classroom or outside of it. An integral part of NFE is that the learners participate in the design, development, implementation, and evaluation of their own learning". Finally, informal education is not bound by a specific place, nor group, nor time: it 'happens' to everyone every day, almost accidentally. For this reason, precisely because it does not require an enrolment, it does not entail a specific duration, and it has no final exam, it is also referred to as "lifelong learning", since it can potentially last the entire life.

Volunteer language teaching usually falls into the second category of non-formal education given that the first category is almost always delegated to professionals recognized by the State. The

third category, for lacking a structure would not fit this type of approach. The following paragraph focuses on the implementation of educational programs as part of volunteering programmes.

3.2 Volunteer Language Teaching and Non-Formal Education

Volunteering has evolved throughout the decades, and it is impossible to trace the first act that humankind has experienced. Nonetheless, it is intrinsically intertwined with the human 'nature'. In the words of Professor Benjamin Lough leading expert on social work and volunteering abroad "enlightenment missions, religious brigades and overseas help for disaster recovery can be considered early forms of international volunteering" (Lough, 2012, cited in Hechenberger, 2019, p.144). Hechenberger in 2019 researched and analysed the history of this phenomenon, noticing how the first documented forms are linked to the British Red Cross in 1900s. On the other hand, organizations having international volunteering as their core mandate started to exist in the aftermath of World War II, driven by the collective effort towards peace that leads to the creation of the United Nations. An example of this, can be considered the Australian Volunteers International (AVI) founded in 1951 and still active in sending Australian volunteers in Africa, Asia, Middle East, and Pacific. Another successful story is the Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO), created by Mora and Alec Dickson in 1958. It initially focused on recruiting only young boys that were unskilled. Through the years, it switched its focus to university graduates, ensuring qualified support.

With the growth of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) all around the world, in the 80s and 90s, volunteer projects expanded their reach. This shift resulted in NGOs being considered responsible for them. Moreover, the boom in volunteerism coincided with the rejection of mass-tourism and the "emergence of new «responsible» or «ethical» types of tourism" (Butcher, 2013, cited in Hechenberger, 2019, p.144). As a consequence, the sector together with its scholars started to critically reflect upon its role and consequences, especially considering that the vast majority of volunteers and organisations were coming from the Global North and that the projects were almost always implemented in the Global South, resulting in a covert form of neo-colonisation. Hechenberger (2019) reflected upon the fact that the private sector has largely benefited from volunteer holidays which are in turn appealing to the public since the combine free time spent by travelling while feeling better thanks to the projects that create the feeling of

giving a concrete contribution. According to the author "IVS is an organized period of engagement and contribution to society by volunteers who work across an international border, in another country or countries. IVS may be sponsored by public or private organisations, it is recognised and valued by society, and volunteers receive little or no monetary compensation". (Hechenberger, 2019, p.144).

IVS work with organisations in many projects and areas such as health, education, orphanage care, environmental conservation, construction, farming, community development, animal care, business consulting, etc. The majority of projects are geared towards education and teaching English. The University Professor Adela Bradea (2023) explains that when students engage in volunteering, this ultimately contributes to the development of their personality as compassionate adults, enabling them at the same time to compete extra-curricular goals. In addition, Bradea defines volunteering as when a person "voluntarily and deliberately decides to engage in an activity for the benefit of another person, a group of individuals or a community, without being remunerated in any way" (Bradea, 2023, p.574).

Another important term coined and associated to this topic is "voluntourism", since volunteering has grown within the tourism industry rapidly. It offers the possibility, especially among citizens from wealthy nations, to make the difference in developing countries (Hechenberger, 2019, p.145). Volunteers who choose to teach abroad typically engage in Non-Formal Education: "the role of the Volunteer is to work with host country nationals to facilitate the process, and non-formal education methods can be used from the initial assessment stage to the final evaluation and realization of the process and product" (Peace Corps, 2004, p.9).

Save the Children (2013) in the report *Ending the Hidden Exclusion: Learning and equity in education post-2015* highlights the cost and discrimination against millions of children who while having access to education cannot enjoy their fundamental rights since the quality offered is very limited. As a consequence, while some statistical studies show that in some countries the majority of children are counted in the formal educational system, these very children are discriminated and deprived of quality education and, *de facto,* excluded from future job opportunities.

As mentioned before, volunteering is part of the non-formal education sector with many advantages and many good outcomes for learners. According to Bradea (2023), several scholars such as Blândul (2015), Cucoş (2006), Ciolan (2008), Marinescu (2013), and Orţan (2003) highlighted about those advantages and they claimed that "it allows to students to participate in

educational activities carried out in a flexible training space, in a positive effective climate that is understanding, responsible, responsive, etc.; it allows students to achieve sustainable learning by assimilating the information generated by permanent interactions; it allows students to achieve students to put into practice, in various contexts, the knowledge acquired in a particular field; it gives students the opportunity to transfer knowledge, methods, principles, language from one field to another; in encourages interactive learning by encouraging problem solving, decision making, etc.; it capitalizes on critical and creative thinking; it involves capitalizing on and practicing different ways of communication: verbal, nonverbal, artistic, musical, corporal, relational, etc.; it aims at creating flexible and integrated mental and action-behavioural structures with great potential for transfer and adaptation" (Bradea, 2023, p.576).

Non-formal learning is a non-stressful way of learning, where the topics and subjects learned are mostly from personal interest and they cannot be found in formal contexts. It concerns the development of social skills and it teaches to appreciate the difference and the diversity. It also teaches how to work in a team and to take initiatives. Communication is a key concept of non-formal education as well as being creative and open minded. Furthermore, volunteering is an important part of non-formal learning and education.

Non-formal learning allows both the teacher and students to engage in a less stressful setting in which the topics covered better respond to personal interests and, without replicating the subjects taught through the formal system, it fosters the appreciation of diversity.

As Krezios (2008) wrote: "the abstract meaning of volunteerism was associated with the 'difficult but eventually pleasant' experience of helping those perceived as 'in real need'. In this sense volunteerism was constructed as 'service', 'offering without expecting remuneration', 'out of personal choice, without relation to certificates', 'personal growth', 'travelling', 'doing for society's benefit', 'learning to function in a team', 'only moral satisfaction', 'without age limit', 'admirable' and 'important', and 'without partying'" (Krezios, 2008, cited in here2stay, p.63).

Sorin Cristea, well known professor and expert in Pedagogy, analysed the importance of volunteering while studying to complement the knowledge built at school. To this end, he encouraged volunteering since "it aims to acquire new social skills" (Cristea, 2018, cited in Bradea, 2023, p.574). In the study called *Volunteering Without Partying – Perception of Non-Formal Learning by Young Adults in Greece*, Krezios and Ambrazas took into examination the direct experiences of young volunteers in Greece. In the section entitled "Real Life Stories", the

authors present meaningful and diverse perspectives, including volunteers' personal reflections and feedback regarding non-formal learning and volunteering experiences.

By looking into these young adults' perspectives, shared values and inspiring recount emerge. It is common to feel mixed emotions before being deployed abroad for the chosen project, as Maria recalls: "before the European Volunteer Service (EVS) I had really strange feelings. I knew I wanted to do something creative, I wanted to travel and live abroad, change my life. The moment I heard about it, I got really excited as it was not only a great chance to travel abroad and live there but also to work in the youth sector in a very interesting project. My family was not really in favor but I had taken my decision and no one could change my mind". (Krezios & Ambrazas, 2011, p. 66)

Another section of the paper by Krezios and Ambrazy (cited in here2stay, 2011) is called "How have non-formal learning experiences positively influenced you?" delves deep into the impact that this kind of experiences engender and shape volunteers' personality. For instance, Aristodimos Parashou, following and building upon his volunteering experience decided to found the NGO *United Societies of Balkans.* When reflecting upon it, he recognizes the betterment that came thanks to volunteering abroad: "I became a better person. I now act more empathetically. I softened stereotypes and prejudices for people who don't have the same attitude or cultural identity as mine. I realised that the most important thing in life is peace and the efforts for ensuring it for everyone" (Krezios & Ambrazas, cited in here2stay, 2011, p.64). His analysis does not shy away from criticism and constructive feedback: "one (disputably) negative thing is that non-formal education is not so much recognized; by the society and the state. But after my participation in some activities, I have developed skills necessary to any job nowadays such as leadership, creativity, spirit of initiative, appreciation for teamwork and more. Language skills have also been enhanced" (Krezios & Ambrazas, cited in here2stay, 2011, p.65). Other critiques are expressed by the Professor Emerita Joann Crandall, that exposes the lack of resources, the prevalence of part-time or limited positions that cause significant rates of turnover for English language teaching. In a context in which the vast majority of employees (80%) are volunteers, continuity and standards suffer from the unstable conditions (Tamassia et al., 2007).

The minimal or no compensation at all constitute a major component of the value of volunteering for a growing population that cannot afford expensive classes but still need English acquisition. Following a quantitative research carried out by the Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies of the University of Oradea completed between February and May 2022 through a questionnaire to

outline teachers' perception of volunteering as part of non-formal education, as well as to identify how to involve teachers in school volunteering activities and how teachers value the benefits of volunteering in shaping students' personalities, significant findings emerged.

The majority of teachers (65,8%) engages in volunteering, with the most chosen motivation being altruism (78,4%) to support students in need, citing the importance of strengthening key students' skills as the most desired result (72,5%):

> "becom[ing] more responsible (82,4%), develop[ing] communication and relationship skills – can communicate assertively and persuasively; can adapt their communicative discourse according to contexts, situations, circumstances, audience (79,5%); can assume roles and responsabilities within teams (66,7%); can analyse and critically assess facts, problems, situations, can explore innovative ways of solving problems (64,5%); use self-assessment and self-analysis capabilities of their own potential in the activities carried out (41,2%) (Bradea, 2023, p.579).

In order to succeed in NFE education, Lyra created an acrostic for the word "success" to remind the importance of designing a participatory plan. To begin with she advises to "set a brief, clear task rather than lecturing > share power"; the letter "U" stands for "use hands-on, multi-sensory materials rather than rely only on verbal communication > broaden the base of participation"; it is followed by the first "C" to "create an informal, relaxed atmosphere > equalize status" and the second to "choose growth-producing activities > draw out talents, leadership, mutual respect". The next two "E" pertain to "evoke feelings, beliefs, needs, doubts, perceptions, aspirations > ensure relevance" and "encourage creativity, analysis, planning > enhance personal confidence self-esteem, resourcefulness and skills". Finally, "D" is used to remind to "decentralize decision-making > develop capacity for practical action" (Srinivasan cited in Peace Corps, 2004, p.17).

Based on the numerous sources analysed, it is evident that the impact of volunteering is not limited to the learners of a given foreign language, but also to the teachers who embark in those projects. As confirmed by Bradea's words "the formative values of volunteering prove to be indisputable: training people with self-confidence who are open to lifelong learning, who are active, proactive, creative and innovative, and who are responsible and civic-minded" (Bradea, 2023, p.580).

On the topic, Peace Corps (2004) have provided an overview of the main scholars that provided useful aids for teachers irrespective of the subject taught. The prominent Brazilian pedagogist and theorist Paulo Freire developed the methodology of "problem-posing" to shift the thinking of

marginalized groups regarding issues concerning day-to-day life so that critical thinking became the core of decision-making, and these disadvantaged groups feel empowered. Howard Gardner, import psychologist and professor from the United States pushed the limits of the common understanding of intelligence and listed seven different types: bodily/kinaesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, linguistic, logical/mathematical, musical, and spatial. Following his understanding, teachers should encourage students to make use of all the above-mentioned types to stimulate a more comprehensive learning process. On the other hand, Malcolm Knowles focused on the distinction between adult and child education, stressing upon the radical different needs of the two groups. During the 80s, David Kolb developed a model called "the experiential learning cycle" that starts from concrete experimentation to reflective observation, and from abstract conceptualization to active experimentation. Bernice McCarthy divided learners into four categories: analytic, common sense, dynamic, and imaginative. Following these distinctions, teachers and volunteers alike can better understand the classroom in front of them, assigning specific tasks to different groups, while tapping into a pool of tools provided by pedagogists over the decades (Peace Corps, 2004).

3.3 Ethical and Pedagogical Issues in Volunteer Teaching

In the last fifty years, international and national organizations focused on recruiting and deploying volunteers grew significantly expanding their projects in terms of theme and type of communities involved as receivers of such initiatives. As a consequence, the act of volunteering became a common experience especially for students and graduates since it helped boosting their CVs and increasing their chances of being selected for prestigious university programs and early career job opportunities. Naturally, while volunteering is open to all ages, the majority of people embarking in projects abroad are young. On the other hand, the experience of the beneficiaries of these teaching projects is seldom captured by scholars and experts. Therefore, little is known about the tangible impact on local communities (Hechenberger, 2019).

While the multiple beneficial sides are undisputable, several problems and dilemmas emerged. For example, short-term programmes have been thoroughly analysed, noticing how to some extent they are less impactful, sometimes leading to an unjustified consumption of resources (Guttentag cited in Hechenberger, 2019). Nonetheless, authors like Lough et al. (Lough et al.,

2011, 2018, cited in Hechenberger, 2019) believe that if professional and experienced volunteers are recruited for brief projects, they still record significant impact, providing to be successful and worthwhile. Luyan Cui (2023) reflects upon the marginalized contexts that host teaching programs, arguing that "college students come to poverty-stricken areas, which alleviates the shortage of teachers in local schools, bringing more advanced teaching concepts and distinctive teaching methods, and broadens the horizons of local students" (Cui, 2023, p.472). On the other hand, practical and operational issues concerning volunteers as well as ethical dilemmas should not be overlooked. When the students involved make use of their holidays and/or their internship time, their engagement is by default limited in terms of time. In addition, they are most often missing adequate skills and awareness of the context in which participants engaged. Some scholars have highlighted that insufficient preparation and limited knowledge of local contexts may negatively affect volunteering experiences, potentially leading to communication difficulties and cultural misunderstandings.

According to Hechenberger (2019): "nationality, race, ethnicity and religion is a crucial factor to consider in education IVS. Cultural misunderstanding is one of the most cited difficulties that foreign teachers face in a classroom". (Deutschmann, 1966; Zhou & Shang, 2011, cited in Hechenberger, 2019, p.149). In addition to the language barrier, people often forget how culturally engrained school materials are and how differences in cultural values and customs can cause conflict such as problems of misconduct and scepticism from fellow teachers (Farndale, 2009, cited in Hechenberger, 2019). On the other hand, these differences can bring cultural enrichment, for both the volunteer and the host, only if well managed (Raymond & Hall, 2008, cited in Hechenberger, 2019).

Short-term programs geared around teaching inevitably encounter the obstacle of being unable to secure duration and consistency. Another common pitfall is related to the overall sustainability of the learning process for the students involved who experience inconsistency in terms of approaches and curricula as well as difficulties in bonding and establishing trust-based relations with those teachers that, especially in early and transitioning ages, are supposed to be guiding figures. As a consequence, volunteers are bound to step into a complex environment, of which they miss key information regarding interpersonal and group dynamics. As Cui (2023) highlights "it is difficult for volunteers to understand the teaching progress of previous volunteer teachers and local teachers, and the teaching content mainly focuses on broadening their horizons. This results in local students being unable to obtain sustained and effective knowledge from volunteers

and the learning content is fragmented, which has no practical help in building students' knowledge systems" (Cui, 2023, p.472).

Even if volunteering represents a significant social phenomenon among student communities, it encounters strong resistance from different component of the society. For example, some might experience psychological resistance due to also limited resources and time availability. In the circumstance in which students might not feel to be adequately prepared for the experience of teaching abroad, or more in general participating in an international volunteering project and tailored training can close the knowledge or technical skills gap. Conversely, self-motivation proves to be the strongest driver concerning the decision-making process (Ussenova, 2025).

With regard to ethics, two major dilemmas emerge: motivation and identity. Some scholars have argued that volunteering may at times be influenced by self-interest, as volunteers can also seek personal enrichment, international experience, and opportunities for self-development. In this perspective, concerns have been raised about the possibility that personal achievement may occasionally take precedence over the actual quality and effectiveness of volunteer teaching programmes. Hechenberger spells the problematic aspects that underpin the above-mentioned dilemmas, namely "the misalignment of expectations, the overemphasis of volunteer enthusiasm, the perpetuation of stereotypes, dependency and the neglect of host communities' needs" (Hechenberger, 2019, pp.149–151). At the same time, he does not shy away from outlining the core benefits that international volunteering service entails, such as a better awareness of the international context for all the parties involved; a stronger sense of commitment and bond for the betterment of the local community; a tangible contribution in helping the most marginalized and vulnerable communities; and, finally, an attempt to mitigate tourist industry's negative impact. Ultimately, another important ethical dilemma has been highlighted in recent years by Cui (2020) revolves around the, sometimes conflicting, identities; namely the teacher role in short-term volunteering projects.

As reported in the "Developing social and emotional skills through non-formal learning" by EU, striking is the difference between those volunteers who engage with us and those who work with adults and elderly since the dynamics shift completely. In the first environment it is likely to encounter school dropouts, with situations that are not standardized, but rather peculiar to the specific situation. For example, the schedule may not be structured; children might find themselves relying only on the volunteers, lacking adult reference figures, leading to high levels of disengagement. This in turns exposes them to physical and emotional abuse, with heightened

levels of anxiety to perform even regular tasks, including meeting their basic human needs. In such critical instances, providing out-of-school free of charge programs, the role of the volunteer is key to "identify their own needs, facilitating information-gathering sessions and helping them to evaluate their own progress" (EU Commission, 2020). Not only highly developed social skills are required to be able to understand such complex environments, but it is also important that volunteers are equipped with a network of support to avoid burnouts and to navigate the obstacles the experience might present.

A useful tool to track sensitive events and topics is to employ interviews, choosing the most appropriate one. For instance, informal interviews are very common since they are the results of questions that emerge spontaneously. Notwithstanding, the undisputable advantages like their unstructured design that requires little preparation, they can result into inconsistent data that is difficult to systematize. When working with communities, two separate approaches can help understanding the nuances on the ground: asset-based and problem-posing.

Two philosophies can be applied when working with communities: one is called "asset-based" and the other one is called "problem-posing" approach. The first approach can be also called "strength-based", it highlights the positive aspects, the resources, and the activities that a community holds. Rather than looking at the existing gaps "the emphasis is on identifying and enhancing existing assets, while promoting networking among groups and community members, and de-emphasizing blame for existing problems" (Peace Corps, 2004, p.27). On the other hand, problem-posing, also known as education for critical consciousness, has been developed by Freire (1970) to raise awareness on social problems and to empower marginalized and disadvantaged groups to act, being leaders of the change desired rather than mere recipients of any given project that might have been designed elsewhere.

In order to understand, measure, and timely adapt projects' approach, feedback is crucial. This would show success when strategies implemented are coherent with the context and that can be replicated elsewhere. On the other hand, it would point out to the area that need strengthening and further development. As highlighted in the context of EU-funded non-formal learning volunteer projects "the question arises in particular for lack of feedback provided from the recipients of the volunteers' work to assess if they found such work to be beneficial for them and their peers in local community contexts" (Hechenberger, 2019, p.150).

For this purpose, the Joint Research Center (JRC) of the EU has developed a set of policy implications to take into account when drafting this type of projects so that the strengthening of core soft skills is ensured. Firstly, funding strategies ought to be as comprehensive as possible to guarantee their sustainability and greater implementation in the following years. To do so they have to "promote projects targeted to the development of social and emotional skills through non-formal education" (European Commission, 2020, p.4). Similarly, thematic activities shall be embedded into an EU framework of "key competence[s] on personal, social and learning" (European Commission, 2020, p.5) aspects. Following that, it is suggested to keep an "assertive outreach approach" (European Commission, 2020, p.8) to ensure the inclusion of minorities and marginalized groups. Evaluation must be carried to record the positive impact engendered especially through a "longitudinal approach" (European Commission, 2020, p.13) which would allow to single out the impact of non-formal education from the other learning strategies implemented on the ground. If the feedback gathered is extended to "explicit and consistent processes" (European Commission, 2020, p.14), it makes space for recording every participant experience and opinion.

When it comes to the actors involved in knowledge transfer, three are the main figures: the teacher, the trainer, and the facilitator. The nuances among these roles help distinguish that while the teacher is most commonly following a curriculum and a set of guidelines, in a nutshell, he or she is the responsible for the students to assimilate and learn. The second role, the trainer, "addresses specific requests from individuals or groups for new knowledge and skills relevant to their goals and pursuit" (Peace Corps, 2004, p.14). Thirdly, a more recent yet ever growing figures is the one of the facilitators, since "he/she guides a group through a process of expressing ideas, analysing issues, making sound decisions, and building relationships" (Peace Corps, 2004, p.14). This last role is one of the main, most challenging, and rewarding because it has to empower participants to take charge of their own learning. While it is important to foster a safe environment conducive to free conversations, the trainer has to mind their duration to have time not just for each topic, but also to ensure that more introvert students have the same chance as those who tent to dominate the discussion. Silence shall not be feared, rather welcomed and accepted while considering it an opportunity to be clearer and to use other words to express the same request (Peace Corps, 2004).

The study conducted by UNICEF Bangladesh in 1989 titled "Visualisation in Participatory Programmes" delves deep into the art of facilitation and the quintessential role of the facilitator as key elements to ensure quality education by showing the related nuances and specificities. As

noted in the report “facilitation is an art and a craft. It is a craft in that the facilitator must know and follow the rules, learn how to pose the right question at the right moment and write clearly. It is also an art that requires experience and intuition since the facilitator must create a drama that allows the group to give all of its potential to the process” (UNICEF Bangladesh, 1989). Indeed, flexibility is required not only to steer the conversation and to transform possible conflicts; it is also needed in order to be ready to swich techniques according to the temperature of the group involved in a given session (UNICEF Bangladesh, 1989).

Over the decades, a variety of checklists and guidelines have been produced to support newcomers in stepping into the role of facilitators. For example, the Nonformal Education (NFE) Manual suggests the learning process by proposing diverse tasks; to adjust the speed and the schedule duration to the energy levels of the group; to ensure attention to details, proof-reading materials distributed to the class; to build a joyful environment by showing a positive attitude and by sharing one’s passion; guiding the conversation by validating participants’ inputs, by asking open-ended questions and motivating responses; organizing sub-groups to enable the flow of the conversation; and, finally, working to keep the attention on the chosen topic (Peace Corps, 2004).

To begin with, prior to engage in the core of the discussion, brainstorming is a useful technique to allow ideas to surface and connect among each other: “a facilitator asks a specific question or describes a particular scenario, and participants offer many different ideas. These ideas are then usually written on a flipchart or chalkboard and considered for further discussion. Brainstorming can be used in any kind of group discussion when you want to encourage creativity and contributions from all members. Use this technique at the beginning of a session, class or meeting” (Peace Corps, 2004, p.33).

There are several aspects that a class coordinator must follow during a lesson: The first aspect to consider is the “case study”; a case study must refer to local topics or subjects, and it has to be involved with some student discussion in groups. Another important core point for a class coordinator is the “demonstration”; it is fundamental during a lesson to grab the students’ attention and during the demonstration the teacher can exhibit the topic or the activity in a performance to keep students more focused. “Dramatization” is another key issue for a volunteer teacher; the student can perform a scene in a learning contest rather than just read and study it. This will help them to impersonate the script and memorise better important points and messages from the related text. Moving on to the specifics, it is fundamental to analyse the “fishbowl” technique; as the name implies, in a fishbowl debate, a large number of participants sit in a circle while a smaller

group of them sits inside the circle. This can have a dual purpose: it can be used as a brainstorming session or for an observation of a group process during a student discussion. Furthermore, it is essential for a volunteer teacher to play "games" during a lesson: Games can be fundamental tools for an instructor to enhance the learners' skills and to increase the knowledge of the topic. In addition, another didactic approach that come to aid in these situations is the one called "Jigsaw learning", where a skilled professor teaches to a new group of students some specific subjects and the coordinator accomplish the activity and highlight the key point of the lesson with the listeners. Further key issues to keep students focused on the topic are the "lecturette" and the "panel discussions", where the tutor develops a lesson in a short, direct way. These methods help the instructor to be more appealing with the scholars and to impart the information in a structured manner. For example, in the panel method each presenter speaks concisely on a related subject and the audience ask some questions on this specific topic. Other essential vehicles that help to increase students' concentration and make the lesson more appealing for the students are "pictures", "role play" and "stories". Each of them can be useful "weapon" for the professor to transmit a concept to the listeners in a creative way, and to involve participants in the discussion to share personal opinions and ideas. Roles are usually set out, and the moderator may help the students playing the roles and understanding "who" they are. In addition, using stories in a learning activity can be a successful teaching method, especially in cultures that have a rich oral tradition. In conclusion, the last core point is "visualization", where the facilitator asks students to imagine a specific moment or ideal image of future, to investigate the deepest aspirations and ambitions of the participants (Peace Corps, 2004).

Evaluation is a cornerstone to gather the learning process full picture. It is standardized to guarantee comparisons across the key aspects in which a language, or any other subject, is structured (i.e. listening, reading, writing, and speaking). Also, the internal levels for each category are harmonized across different systems, so that a student is able to locate their knowledge and skills as beginner/A1, intermediate/B1, and proficient/C1. To capture the progress different types of evaluations are administered: "pre-tests, final evaluations can be useful in helping you determine the impact of an activity, session or workshop on learners' knowledge, skills, attitudes and/or behavioural change" (Peace Corps, 2004, p.52).

In order to overcome recurring issues affecting volunteer programmes and the organisation of teaching activities, some scholars have suggested that universities and non-profit organisations should adopt more rigorous selection procedures to identify candidates who are genuinely

motivated and suitable for volunteering positions. Furthermore, greater continuity could be ensured by encouraging volunteers to maintain contact with teachers and learners even after the end of the volunteering experience. Another paramount factor is motivation since as stated by Ofoegbu “it influences teacher behaviour and by extension learning outcomes” (2004, cited in Hechenberger 2019, p.148). However, when skills are not properly developed to the level needed, motivation is not sufficient. In this scenario, volunteers can bring “refreshing ideas, new energy, or simply the extra help they needed. Also, motivated volunteers are likely to commit to significant training prior to their deployment, which can significantly compensate for their lack of teaching experience” (Hechenberger, 2019, pp.147). This exchange of good practices and experiences is what Hechenberger (2019) calls the “cultural proficiency”.

Notwithstanding the clear limitation of projects that last for a short time, which equally impact all the stakeholders involved, the opportunity for local children and young people to access to free education, while making new friends and building trust relations plays an important role to guarantee the success of the project, and therefore, tangible impact. At the same time, having the chance to acquire new skills, learning first-hand about different cultures while socializing with an international community serve to convince people to join volunteering programs (Ussenova et al., 2025).

3.4 Teaching English in Low-Resource Contexts

Accurately designing an international volunteering project focused on education is a process that requires due documentation, context analysis, clear definition of roles, and detailed budgeting. When the environment chosen to implement such program is located in a low-income country, the initial plan must inevitably adapt and respond to the constraints. It is likely that the theoretical framework suffers from this scarcity. On the field, building a physical environment that responds to and improves the learning process is a difficult task. Therefore, it is essential to consider eight key features and their related guiding questions.

The first item is the size, for which it is important to clearly state the quantity of participants foreseen, considering also if the number of attendees is sufficient; following that, arrangement needs to be taken into account. In light of the tasks envisioned, organizing the group in different shapes or forms can shift the dynamic. Another aspect that can be easily neglected is the

temperature. Whether a room is excessively or not enough warm determines how participants can feel physically comfortable or not impacting at the same time also their attention level. The fourth aspect concerns accessibility: the chosen space must be welcoming all people without enabling disabilities to hinder someone's attendance and participation. Cleanliness including furniture's state ought to be inspected beforehand. Students, irrespective of where they choose to stay need to be able to see the trainer (visuals). Conversely, hearing and sounds have to be tested to zero possible nuisance. Finally, decoration helps learning through posters, diagrams, and drawings result in a more comfortable and welcoming space, which, intern, strengthens their ownership.

Regrettably, most of the times, especially in volunteering settings, it is almost impossible to have the right physical environment and volunteers have limited if any capacity to ameliorate it. Another important aspect to consider is the understanding and, as a consequence, respect of the local culture and traditions including gender, caste, age, religion, to name a few. For example, when it comes to gender, the critical and sensitive analysis of the circumstances help understand if the lateness of a girl student is due to the fact that she is expected to perform some tasks at home. This might lead to her missing part of the classes as well as affect the surrounding learning environment.

According to Muralidharan and Sheth (2014, cited in Hechenberger, 2019), an unequal composition of a given class in which the male population is dominant can be mitigated through gender equal representation: "studies have found that female teachers significantly increase girls' attendance and performance in school" (Muralidharan & Sheth, 2014, cited in Hechenberger, 2019, p.147). The intersectional dimensions of gender, culture, religion, race, class, and ability are simultaneously at play at the individual and collective level. The learning experience is not immune, rather shaped by all these aspects which can play a positive or negative role. It is important, furthermore, not to assume that the impact of gender on education applies only to girls.

To this end, Hechenberger (2019) offers a brief set of guidelines that can help the volunteers understanding the multifaceted context in which they operate. As a start, self-learning mitigates internalized biases and allows to make sense of all the variables at stake. It is important to interact with host country nationals (HCN) as well as one's personal support network to decide on possible strategies that would take into account all the factors while mitigating the issues respectfully. Employing fresh perspectives, innovating techniques, and unconventional strategies is key to deescalate. Making space for open and frank conversations is conducive to the understanding of

power dynamics and results in a more inclusive learning experience, one that is intertwined with personal and collective growth.

When working in a volunteer context of NFE, or in a formal setting, some tools or materials can come in help to seek the attention of participants and to communicate in a better way, even in low resources contexts. Some examples can be puppets, sand tables or models, modelling clay, paints, batik (very common in Indonesia), paste. Another creative strategy could entail the transformation of "junk" or discarded objects to repurpose them and make them useful again. Peace Corps (2004) offers a list of five intuitive steps. Initially, the very concept of "trash" is problematized and understood through different cultural lenses. Once the type of garbage is selected for the activity, it needs to be collected, and its possible use is agreed within the group. Introducing an individual or group challenge further motivates students into considering different and possible employments of what was once 'trash' and is now a resource. The ideas that emerge are channelled into the class itself and care is introduced at all levels to guarantee sanitation when transforming the materials into the chosen result.

In conclusion, every year thousands of volunteers travel to disadvantages communities to teach and support local educators. Despite the problems that they might face, it is still a twofold opportunity for personal and community grow. Short-term projects, despite their visible limitations still contribute to the learning process of local students with invaluable support, provided that the motivations, the knowledge, and the personal approach are genuine.

IV. Chapter 3 – Context and Research Methodology

To analyse the Indonesian context, it is important to take into account their education system, the basic education in general, and the English learning policy. For the latter, English taught as EFL as well as the use of English in tourism and, in particular, in the Yogyakarta surroundings, are to be considered as a mean of communication with visitors and local people. In this chapter, the academic sources are blended with my personal experience of teaching English in Indonesia as a volunteer. It emerges that learning this subject, especially in the Yogyakarta area, is quintessential to bridge the gap between remote locations in which the public system struggles to ensure the right to education and the support provided by international volunteer programs. For the purpose of the present research, I employ the first-person singular "I" to convey the idea that my experience inevitably carries its personal perspective and point of view. In this regard, I believe that presenting it in an impersonal way would deprive the chapter from the peculiarities and the needed subjectivity. In addition, the first-person singular helps the reader to distinguish between my experience and the related academic sources that are presented below.

4.1 The Indonesian Context and the Volunteer Programme

The Indonesian context is greatly heterogenous as well as centred in its policies and decisions. From the rural areas far from the advanced methods to the more metropolitan technological cities with greater opportunities for students, Indonesia is a vast and multi-coloured country and offers a wide range of educational realities. Despite these disparities, the government is making significant efforts to ensure access to quality education and equal opportunities throughout the country. The volunteer program I joined was based in a relatively large city on Java Island, called Yogyakarta. The school system was adequately equipped and the level of education provided by the teachers was sufficiently high-quality. The main purpose of my work was to boost the English level of the students, in particular with speaking skills and pronunciation.

4.1.1 General Indonesian Background

Indonesia in an archipelago of approximately 5000 kilometres in South East Asia, between the Indian and the Pacific Oceans, encompassing 3 time zones from the east borders to the west border. It comprises 17508 islands, some inhabited (around 6000 of them), many still not inhabited. Furthermore, it is the 4th largest country in the world, with a population of more than 250 million people. It also has the 16th largest economy in the world, and the largest economy in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Moreover, it is one of the most world's major emerging market economies and the world's most populous Muslim nation, especially considering the area of Java Island. (…) Indonesia is an independent republic since 1945: the 1945 Constitution of Indonesia provides for the separate and independent exercise of executive, legislative and judicial powers and functions. The current president is Prabowo Subianto, an ex-military officer, from Gerindra, a right-wing conservative party. The composition of the Indonesian population by religious affiliation is: Muslim 87,2%, Christian 7%, Roman Catholic 2,9%, Hindu 1,7%, other 0,9% (includes Buddhist and Confucian) and unspecified 0,4%. (OECD & Asian Development Bank, 2015)

In addition, basic English language teaching and learning for middle and high school students has been prioritized to equip students with such skills and to ensure international communication. To carry out this effort, the official institutional position has been "to master foreign languages, protect regional languages, and give priority to Indonesian" (Alfarisy, 2020, as cited in Jihad et al., 2024, p. 442). However, the author is in stark contrast with the motto cited above since the government allocation of budget has been reduced for English teaching, further deepening the gap between students that can access private tutoring or are reached by specific programs, and those who cannot afford it and are left behind causing further marginalisation. (Jihad et. Al., 2024, p.442)

Education plays an important, crucial role in Indonesia, likewise in many countries of the world. The Ministry of Education is striving to secure universal primary education. In order to do so, different programmes and funding have been developed. Specifically, since 2005 "the school operational assistance (bantuan operasional sekolah or BOS) grant (…) enabled free education in primary and junior secondary schools and had a significant impact on increasing access to basic

education. It helped all schools but particularly those in poor and more remote areas, many of which previously lacked in education budget" (OECD & Asian Development Bank, 2015, p.102).

According to official sources from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, "Indonesia is the largest country in the world that has its own challenges to achieve quality education targets in all regions, including the 3T (frontier, outermost, and least developed) region" (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology, Republic of Indonesia, 2022, p.5). Surely, having thousands of islands scattered across the Pacific Ocean increases the struggle to ensure that state-wide programmes reach every province and boroughs effectively and timely throughout the school year.

When it comes to government-mandated English teaching, since the state independence in 1945, subsequent policies have been passed to ensure its universal approach. The consequences of the violent colonial ruling, namely the Dutch, played a significant role in shaping the school system. Firstly, the "Lesson Plan Curriculum" was launched in 1947 and lasted until 1968. Through this programme, English was taught from elementary school with an emphasis on reading and writing. In this setting, two different systems of education were recognised by the State: The Islamic and the Dutch one. The latter "was characterized by strict policies and a class divide, providing separate education to different groups" (Jihad et al., 2024, p.446). According to Jihad et al. (2024) this transitional phase was instrumental in shaping the educational system as it is currently organised. Later on in 1975, a new policy was introduced under the name "1975 Curriculum". It presented a stronger emphasis on developing communication skills in English. The main difference compared to the previous plan was its "centralised and goal-oriented educational framework that aimed to enhance the quality of education and align it with national development goals. It emphasized the use of Instructional System Development Procedure (PPSI) and was influenced by behavioural psychology" (Jihad et al., 2024, p.446). Despite the efforts to ameliorate the national system, this programme was later criticised for the difficulty faced during the implementation phase, especially for not being responsive to local requirements. While the goal was to unify the educational system, it fell short due to its strictness (Jihad et al., 2024). Subsequently, after almost a decade, the "1975 Curriculum" was replaced by the adoption of "1984 Curriculum", which responded to the new and more forward oriented approaches, especially the communicative side. Jihad ed al. (2024) describe how this policy updated the understanding of Science and Technology as key subjects to be taught. The main features of the

above-mentioned policy pertain the focus on learning objectives; active student learning (CBSA); spiral technique to bundle the lesson materials; priority to the instructions given and promoting understanding. A step forward was carried out by the "2004 Curriculum" in which English became a mandatory subject at all levels of education. The Competency-Based Curriculum (KBK in Indonesian), aimed at responding to the growing demands for harmonisation of the different juridical levels that in some cases conflicted. Moreover, as further noted by Jihad et al. (2024, p.447), "the learning process is now seen as the domain of teacher authority, and the focus is on ensuring that students acquire the necessary competencies at a particular level. Competence is defined as a combination of values, attitudes, knowledge, and abilities demonstrated through thought and behaviour patterns". After 9 years, the "2013 Curriculum" was issued this time targeting the 21st century skills, including the ability to communicate any other subject in English. It is geared around simplicity and thematic integration with a strong focus on preparing students for future employment and experiences: "the goal (…) is to create a generation that is equipped to confront the future. Because future developments are anticipated in the framework of the program. After being given the learning content, the focus is on encouraging pupils to be able to notice, inquire, reason, and present what they have learned" (Jihad et al., 2024, p.449). Finally, the "Independent Curriculum" is the current educational policy adopted, it gives autonomy to schools to design their own curriculum according to their local needs. This plan promotes independence at all levels and for each stakeholder involved, not just local entities, schools, and teachers, but also the one of the learners in order to equip them with autonomy and critical thinking. As explained by Jihad et al. (2024, p.449) "its flexibility allows students to choose their subjects, learning rhythm, and methods, actively engaging them in the learning process and promoting the development of creative, critical, collaborative, and communicative skills. Additionally, the curriculum emphasizes the use of ICT as a learning support tool, enhancing student access to diverse learning resources, increasing engagement, and facilitating collaboration between students and teachers". The Ministry of Education is currently drafting the next curriculum update which will take the name of "Merdeka Curriculum", also called Independent Curriculum, which is being piloted in some schools to test its validity and adaptability to better respond to the present and future demands.

Indonesian foundations have improved lately in order to offer a good quality of basic education both in terms of qualified teachers, the setting, and infrastructures. Significant improvements compared to previous years have led to bridging the country-wide gaps especially in regards to

the existing disparities between urban and rural areas as well as students' access to education and teachers' certification in remote areas of the country (OECD & Asian Development Bank, 2015).

To date, basic education in Indonesia covers nine years and it is divided into two levels: primary school for six years and three years of junior secondary school. From seven years old (sometimes six years old), kids are enrolled in school, in a combination of public and private institutions. According to OECD and Asian Development Bank report issued in 2015, private schools are divided in two options: faith-based and secular. The first type is the most common one, especially considering the Islamic private schools which fall under the mandate of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA). Nonetheless, to ensure their curriculum alignment, at the district level, the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC) oversees both public and private schools. In this regard, the MOEC goals for the past two decades has been to "guarantee to obtain basic education services of high quality, relevant and equal in every province, district and city" (OECD & Asian Development Bank, 2015, p.103).

Despite the efforts to improve the educational system, the lack of teachers in rural areas hinders the right to education. While acknowledging the sufficient number of qualified teachers, the issue lies in the fact that they are located unevenly, leaving remote areas deprived of sufficient staff and availability. Despite the fact that Indonesia has one of the most numerous student counts, more than 50 million, as reported by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology in 2022, they are scattered across diverse islands far from each other and presenting a different tapestry of classes, ethnicity, socio-cultural status, and setting. This diversity turns into a challenge for the Ministry since despite the efforts of introducing flexibility at the core of school reforms and the political will to train teachers to high standards, the implementation is still far from the levels envisioned.

According to the text (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology), the Republic of Indonesia (2022) reports some challenges regarding teachers in Indonesia which refrain from enrolling in the Master Teacher Programme (Guru Penggerak) perhaps fearing the additional workload. In addition to that, the number institutions that are certified to train teachers, namely the Educational Personnel Education Institutions (LPTK), is not sufficient. This causes a ripple effect with schools left without adequate staff. Another complex issue regards the poor infrastructure and the lack of adequate maintenance. While the government pushes for the

digitalisation of education as a strategy to overcome the disparities in remote areas, the absence of the needed facilities impedes the implementation. Moreover, only a fraction of the personnel has sufficient digital literacy to embark and promote said technological reform. Again, regional disparities deepen the gap across the country (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology, Republic of Indonesia, 2022).

Several are the challenges that Indonesia is facing for the implementation of the English language education policies. Firstly, the resource gap between schools in developed and underdeveloped areas is an unresolved obstacle for each subject including English. Secondly, the lack of qualified English teachers, that are nonetheless distributed unevenly. Thirdly, the scarce support from relevant stakeholders, including the active engagement of parents, families, and more broadly the community, as well as private sectors' investments (Jihad et al., 2024).

The remote learning imposed as a measure to contain the Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated class differences leaving the most vulnerable students deprived of their right to education. Conversely, it pushed for a more comprehensive digitalisation of the educational sector pushing for the transformation country-wide (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology, Republic of Indonesia, 2022). The struggle to implement the technological reform lie also in "the quantity and quality of training related to the use of technology in management and learning process" (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology, Republic of Indonesia, 2022, p.14). Even though some problems persist, access to basic education has grown over the last decade and Indonesia is now close to achieve the universal primary education status (OECD & Asian Development Bank, 2015). Another positive outcome from recent years has been the shifting towards a more inclusive education "that provides quality education for all the children including children with disabilities and to decrease the number of students in special schools" (OECD & Asian Development Bank, 2015, p.106).

Citing the report "National Consultations on Transforming Education in Indonesia" produced by the United Nations in 2022, the country reached universal education for the first nine years of mandatory school, granting equal access to boy and girl students. In line with the goal proposed, the state authorities confirm to be pursuing "the best effort to form inclusive, equal, safe, and healthy schools that are reflected in accomplishing school policies, especially by creating conducive learning environment, encouraging character development for school affiliates, as well

as evaluating the level of literacy in reading and numeracy" (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology, Republic of Indonesia, 2022, p.3). Improvements can be seen also considering that constitutionally, since 2009 the government has committed itself to spending at least 20% of its national budget on education also when, according to law 20/2003 on the National Education System, it strives to ensure equity to compulsory basic education (OECD & Asian Development Bank, 2015).

The education system reform places students at the centre promoting inclusivity while focusing on students' development intending to offer the best quality for education. Even though Indonesian education policies are ameliorating the overall conditions, many challenges are still present especially in the eastern part of the country. Such areas are to be considered fragile in terms of policy implementation: "several regions in Indonesia, especially the 3T (frontier, outermost and least developed) region, are still experiencing difficulties in getting access to quality education and the availability of quality health facilities and services" (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology, Republic of Indonesia, 2022, p.4). On the other hand, with regards to the central government's education policies the Ministry of Education (2022) critically analyses their limitations especially when it comes to implementation especially impacting the regional level. Furthermore, there is a coordinated effort in combatting and dealing with the so-called "three sins" with a zero-tolerance policy. They are intolerance, bullying, and sexual violence. Immediate and mainstreamed effort across the country's region must work to expand the attendance and retention of high school students since according to the Ministry data for the year 2022, "the student sustainability rate from junior high school to high school level is only 87%" (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology, Republic of Indonesia, 2022, p.5). Finally, the educational system must urgently address the lack of inclusivity ensuring that children with special needs are given equal opportunities as well as required support to overcome physical, psychological, and learning barrier present in any given school of the country, in line with the related and mandatory provisions on the matter (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology, Republic of Indonesia, 2022).

Sustainability is an important objective in every country's agenda, also when it comes to education. In this regard, it is paramount to educate young generations through public schooling dedicating an intersectional approach to be blended with the school curriculum. In doing so, it "aims to cultivate knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes that support individuals, schools, and

communities to have an ecologically, socially and economically sustainable future" (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology, Republic of Indonesia, 2022, p.8). Considering its geographical position and the abundance of pristine nature, sustainability becomes a matter of survival and preservation of the each being inhabiting Indonesia. With a vast archipelago dislocated in the Pacific region, the country is prone to natural disasters, including the rising of sea and temperature levels threatening the very existence of some of the islands. Needless is to say that it is facing the brunt of climate change caused by other and mostly Western countries. When it comes to the state's infrastructure, prevention means survival since, as recalled by the "National Disaster Management Agency (BNPB) and the World Bank data said, around 75% of schools in Indonesia have been identified as prone to disaster risk areas. Henceforth, the government implements the Disaster Safe Education Unit (SPAB) program for schools located in vulnerable areas to minimize the risks of the disasters in the Ministry of Education regulation" (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology, Republic of Indonesia, 2022, p.8).

Looking into how school curricula prepare students to the future jobs, regrettably, there is not a uniformed and guaranteed quality level. This is partly due to the fact that teachers' continuous learning is not updated to support students in their endeavour in meeting the most updated requirements presented by the industrial sector and vocational fields. Specifically, "the curriculum is drafted by teachers, principals, supervisors and committees; the implementation of learning has not involved industrial teachers in schools; multi-entry and multi-exit administration is too complicated; the registration and administration system of Kampus Merdeka was considered too complicated" (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology, Republic of Indonesia, 2022, p.9). This consistently affects also the teaching and learning of English.

Jihad et al. (2024) have critically examined the weaknesses and strengths of EFL in Indonesia and offered some key to improve its effectiveness. Among others resourcing nation-wide the annual spending with special focus on those remote areas that most urgently need support. Secondly, to complement such recommendation, teacher training is advised in order to foster competence and skills. Thirdly, engaging stakeholders in every phase of designing and implementing English programmes and policies is suggested so as to guarantee interest and efforts to raise quality and equal delivery (Jihad et al., 2024).

4.1.2 Yogyakarta Setting

The city of Yogyakarta, also called Yogya or Jogja, is a city located in the southern-central part of Java Island, the main island in Indonesia. According to Fleming, it is known for its artistic and cultural heritage. The author highlights how in the surroundings host the marvellous Prambanan temples, known to be "the best surviving examples of Java's extended period of Hindu culture. With nearby Borobudur, they are one of the most compelling sites in Indonesia" (Fleming, 2021, p.1).

Yogyakarta itself is an important centre for education and culture, the main education hub in Indonesia. Furthermore, it has always been considered the cultural heart of Java. It is worth noticing how it is the only region governed by a Sultan. Thanks to "its royal status, Yogyakarta is the national centre for a range of traditional Javanese courtly cultural arts, including ballet, batik textiles, drama, literature, music, poetry, silversmithing, visual arts, and wayang puppetry" (Fleming, 2021, p.1). In particular, Yogyakarta presents a long-lasting heritage of batik, the most distinguished Javanese art, and shadow puppetry. As highlighted by Lonely Planet, "if Jakarta is Java's financial and industrial powerhouse, Yogyakarta is its soul. (…) It is where the Javanese language is at its purest, the arts at their brightest and its traditions at their most visible" (Lonely Planet cited in Fleming, 2021, p.1).

Yogyakarta is also known in Indonesia (and worldwide) as a student hub and student city with many schools and universities and schools. Specifically, the city attracts scholars and researchers of "Javanese traditional culture, including language and literature, dance, batik-making and other courtly crafts work, to gamelan musical instrumentation, and many more" (Fleming, 2021, p.2). As documented by Fleming (2021), 20% of the population is composed by students. This strong presence guarantees regular exchanges across local and international population. In addition, when it comes to communication, while "Indonesian is the official language, and Javanese is the main language for daily conversation, English is commonly used for interaction with international travellers and tourists" (Fleming, 2021, p.5). Therefore, mastering the use of the latter plays an important role including for obtaining better job opportunities.

Culture is at centre of the interests of Yogyakarta, as Fleming (2021) highlights: "Yogyakarta municipality puts culture and arts as a priority within the city's development. (…) [It] can be seen

through the city's Strategic Plan 2017 – 2022, which has an objective to increase social knowledge and awareness of the importance of cultural preservation" (Fleming, 2021, p.9). To conclude the author highlights how "with 137 registered higher education institutions, Yogyakarta is home to a large student population and dozens of schools and universities, including Gadjah Mada University, the country's largest institute of higher education and one of its most prestigious" (*Fleming, 2021, p.12*). Additionally, tourism plays an important role given that the city is one of the most visited locations, second only to Bali: "Tourism Development Vision 2012-2025 seeks to make Yogyakarta: A world class tourist destination, with culture-based, sustainable tourism, contributing to regional development and empowering communities" (Fleming, 2021, p.13).

4.1.3 Volunteering Experience

I found the volunteering program I applied for in 2025 on the website called "Worldpackers" and the name of the volunteering experience was "Teach, Travel, Treasure in the Heart of Yogyakarta". The terms of reference detailed the experience as being located in "one of the largest English language centres in the heart of Yogyakarta. Jet Centre, located in the city centre, making it a vibrant hub for learning and culture. Class taught by professional instructors holding at least a master's degree. Volunteers will support regular teachers, assisting in class activities and learning facilitation" (Worldpackers).

A key feature that captured my attention given my academic path and personal inclination was "social work: help with volunteer work in local projects and communities" and, of course, the volunteer included "teaching a language to the host, guests, or local communities" (Worldpackers), namely English. Upon completion, Worldpackers issued a certificate considering that the program detailed the following activities: "support professional English instructors in small-group classes. Gain experience in educational settings and classroom management. Immerse in Indonesian culture and the local lifestyle of Yogyakarta. Build soft skills such as teamwork, communication, and cross-cultural understanding" (Worldpackers).

As mentioned in the program details section, when I volunteered at Jet Centre, I had the chance to support local English teachers and/or instructors in the small-group classes of around ten students. While working there and helping the instructors, I had the opportunity to gain experience in educational settings and classroom management, fundamental to me. Despite the lack of

teaching experience, it was very useful to engage with the students I was assigned to, with the help of the teachers, who supported my personal growth so that I could learn how to manage a class while building in a "safe environment".

Another aspect that, personally, boosted my motivation in joining this volunteering project was the deep dive "in Indonesian culture and the local lifestyle of Yogyakarta". I really wanted to have an experience different from all the experience I already had. While I had volunteered before: in a charity shop in London and in a music festival in Oslo, Norway. The location was relegated to Europe only. Also, it was not related to my field of study – namely in linguistic or educational settings. Therefore, I decided to take this opportunity since I wanted to challenge myself in a different setting (Asia) and in line with my studies so as to transform what acquired into practical working knowledge. My curiosity extended to getting to know such a rich culture, keeping UNESCO-recognised traditions alive. Finally, I was determined to improve key soft skills like "teamwork, communication, and cross-cultural understanding" (Worldpackers). They taught me how to work, understand, and respect different cultures and traditions. As a matter of fact, they were all skills that I could practice on a daily basis at the Jet Centre, which enriched my experience.

On the website, there is a section called "activities and shift" pertaining to the role I was assigned to, including the expectation to: "assist in classroom activities and student engagement; observe teaching methods and participate in lesson plan execution; participate in weekly briefing sessions to prepare for classroom activities; help with cultural and recreational activities organized by Jet Centre when available" (Worldpackers).

4.2 Research Design: A Qualitative Case Study

Towards the end of my experience at Jet Centre, I interviewed the teachers with whom I worked to collect first-hand feedback about how they navigated their job while having a volunteer in the school. In addition, I enquired about how they perceived my work in the assigned classrooms. I decided to opt for qualitative research since it is a research method that allows to capture the nuances of each response. I built the interview around five main aspects that this approach that typically: "1. Seeks answers to a question; 2. Systematically uses a predefined set of procedures to answer the question; 3. Collects evidence; 4. Produces findings that were not determined in

advance; 5. Produces findings that are applicable beyond the immediate boundaries of the study" (Mack et al., 2005, p.1). The goal of it is to comprehend the decided research problem contemplating the point of view of the sample involved. While doing so, I open the space to incorporating culture-related aspects such as "values, opinions, behaviours, and social contexts of a particular population" (Mack et al., 2005, p.1).

The strength of qualitative research is about the possibility to explore the depths of human feelings and behaviours regarding an issue. As written in the Qualitative Research Methods: A Data Collector's Field Guide, "it provides information about the 'human' side of an issue – that is, the often-contradictory behaviours, beliefs, opinions, emotions, and relationships of individuals. Qualitative methods are also effective in identifying intangible factors, such as social norms, socioeconomic status, gender roles, ethnicity, and religion, whose role in the research issue may not be readily apparent" (Mack et al., 2005, p.1). Another feature that prompted me to employ this method is its flexibility considering that there is a wider range or spectrum of responses, and they are more open. When applying a qualitative research method, the sample must be selected as an early step. This means that the target is not the entirety of a given population, but a sample of it basing the choice on size, diversity, resources, and time available.

There are different types of samplings such as "purposive sampling", "quota sampling", and "snowball sampling". Purposive sampling is one of the most commonly sought; it consists of groups of participants preselected according to relevant criteria needed to answer the research question. On the other hand, quota sampling allows to decide *"*how many people with which characteristics to include as participants. [The above-mentioned] characteristics might include age, place of residence, gender, class, profession, marital status, use of particular contraceptive method, HIV status, etc." (Mack et al., 2005, p.5). Even if similar to purposive sampling, quota sampling in this case is more specific.

Conversely, through snowball sampling the researcher reaches out to persons known, which in turn engage other acquaintances ensuring that the sample number grows just like the metaphoric name suggests. Different strategies have been developed for the recruitment process. Naturally, they "are determined by the type and number of data collection activities in the study and by the characteristics of the study population. They are typically flexible and can be modified if new

topics, research questions, or subpopulations emerge as important to the study, or if initial strategies do not result in the desired number of recruits" (Mack et al., 2005, p.6).

4.3 Participants and Teaching Context

The sample I chose for my interviews was composed by a selected number of teachers of the Jet Centre School of English, I purposefully targeted a mixed group in order to have a diverse and heterogeneous view on my volunteering experience, capturing their perspectives. The sampling selected accommodating their availability and relevance in relation to my experience.

The teaching context was one of a private English school in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Small classes with mainly kids, all followed very carefully by expert teachers who taught with their time, patience and knowledge. The school is a quite modern-style building consisting of three different sections. At the entrance is located the hall and the reception to assist students and parents providing with any requested document or information. It follows the main corridor, with classes on each side. Starting from the entrance, the principal's office can be reached easily. The principal oversees the teachers and all the workers of the school to assure that their job is carried out professionally and at the highest standard of quality.

In the classes, students spend most of their time, as they are involved and challenged by their teachers. Classes are extremely interactive and stimulative. Classrooms are equipped with projectors, while teachers bring their personal laptops and, sometimes, papers for the students. Additionally, in the classes, there are chairs and desks for each student. While it might seem taken for granted, as I understood while travelling across Indonesia, not all schools have the typically Western furniture and students might study and write sitting on the floor, not because of lack of resources, but rather due to a cultural peculiarity. The school structure includes also an open space, a garden with a café, and the two additional main buildings. Given the hot temperatures of the country, it is frequent to encounter a café to offer refrigerated beverages as well as an informal meeting point for the staff.

One of the main buildings, on the right, hosts the teachers' room, a place in which I spent most of my time organizing classes and talking to teachers. Indeed, it is the main space for teachers to

gather and organise classes. A printer serves to accommodate the needs of each class. Moreover, teachers can access computers and desks. A peculiarity of the room is the presence of a raised floor made of wood, where teachers can relax and recharge in between classes, having the possibility to play instruments to decompress and relax.

On the other side of the garden, on the left, other than additional classes there is a prayer room. It is very common to see in Indonesia teachers that take breaks to pray before going back to their scheduled classes. It is used by teachers and students alike to respect and accommodate their right to religion. In the garden itself, there are benches and tables to spend time outside when the weather is not too extreme. A small natural ecosystem in Jet Centre offers flowers, plants, and trees. Moreover, there is a little pond with fishes and a sandy playground for kids to play. Behind the prayer room, there is a room where the social media manager creates content for Instagram or TikTok to make the school even more attractive and technological. I was involved in some content while volunteered there. To conclude, a big parking at the entrance, is a very necessary and important feature to ensure a safe entrance to all, especially the kids. Every day, at ten in the morning, in the school as in most places in Indonesia, everything stops for a few minutes to sing the national anthem.

4.4 Teaching Practices and Classroom Strategies

While volunteering, I had the chance to contribute to the implementation of the teaching methods adopted by the local teachers. I brought my own theoretical experience that I had learned during my Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes, borrowing from diverse subjects such as: "Didactics of Italian Language L1, L2, and LS"; "Theories of Language Education"; and "Methodology of Research in Language Teaching and Learning". Furthermore, I applied what acquired while studying "Intercultural Communication".

Nevertheless, I was an unexperienced volunteer teacher, and I followed and cherished the invaluable suggestions and advice from my colleagues. While at the beginning I found myself nervous and hesitant, slowly all my fears and doubts were overcome by the smiles and the kindness of teachers and students alike. They were very excited to meet a foreigner as much as I was excited to meet them. I had the opportunity to interact with students from all the ages: starting from 6 to 18 years old.

Reading the paper Learning English as Foreign Language in Indonesia through English Children's Literature, by the Professor Leni Marlina Leni from State University of Padang (Indonesia), it becomes evident how "in Indonesia, as well as many other countries, it is necessary for students to learn at least three languages. They are mother language, national language and appropriate foreign language. English has been taught and used as a foreign language in Indonesia over sixty-five years" (Marlina, 2013, p.41). Therefore, one could assume that the students, being used to switch from one language to the other, would present a more flexible approach in learning the English. However, they heavily rely on extra-curricular courses to improve their knowledge and understanding. As Marlina argues: "Despite these efforts most Indonesian students still face the same issues in English learning. Most of students are far than successful in both and in oral and written English (Nur, 2004), unless those who take extra English course outside the formal classroom" (Marlina, 2013, p.41).

One idea cited in the research by the Professor (2013) is to empower students and equip them with engaging materials to support their improvements in a more pleasant way; carefully selected children literature could be a valid example. Moreover, Marlina argued that there are four main reasons which lead an English teacher to use literature and in particular children's literature to teach English in a foreign language class. The first is that it poses as a "valuable authentic material" stories are not made for the goal of teaching and they expose students to a variety of vocabulary that it can be used in everyday life. Secondly, it presents as a "motivating material": "children's literature is more likely to engage and motivate students than artificial teaching inputs because it is generated by some genuine impulse of the writer and it deals with subjects and themes which may be interesting to the students as readers" (Marlina, 2013, p.43). Thirdly, by "cultural enrichment" we consider that students are exposed to imaginary settings and actions though which they can also reflect their feelings and emotions. It supports "language enrichment" considering the wealth of vocabulary, syntax, and use of expressions that would be otherwise missed if relying exclusively on traditional textbooks. Acquiring different structures and expression through children literature, allows to improve understanding and use of the language itself, broadening the possibilities of expression both in oral and written formats. Finally, "personal involvement" is guaranteed thanks to the possibilities to relate to characters and deeds that are inspired from human experience. In turns, it leads to empowerment related to the learning process (Marlina, 2013). Selecting the appropriate texts in children's literature in foreign language

classes is a challenge: it should depend on the target students and their needs and preferences. The teacher should consider three important factors of the texts: language, content, and length.

4.5 Teaching Programme: Students' Needs and Necessities

English is currently studied in the majority of schools' curricula considering its wide and dominant use globally. Indonesia is no exception: "English is learned as a foreign language from kindergarten up to university level. In the term of learning English, students are required to master the basic skills namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Among those four skills, speaking is an important skill that should be learned intensively by the students" (Fauzi and Asi, 2023, p.263). The fact that it is a mandatory subject in all levels and grades proves the intention of the State to stress its importance. Nonetheless, as pointed out by Farhani et al. (2020, p.1), "in reality many students still cannot speak English although they have been studying English for many years. Many students feels anxiety when speaking English, even some of them don't know how to speak English properly".

Cognisant of this, I prioritised students' needs and necessities as I understood that the priority was about the speaking part. Sometimes, it was more useful to stress the grammar and vocabulary, other times the listening was improved through dedicated tasks that supported the learning process. Most of the time I faced some problems with communication and speaking skills, not because of a lack of skills and competences from the students but, due to the so-called "speaking anxiety" that made the oral expression difficult. Learners were not comfortable, perhaps also because they had to express themselves and their possible mistakes not just in front of the class group, but also in front of a stranger like any volunteers is considered, at least at the beginning.

As mentioned by Brown (1991, p.80), foreign language anxiety is "a feeling of intimidation and inadequacy over the prospect of learning a foreign language". Furthermore, consistent with Gardner and MacIntyre, as cited in Oxford (1999, p.60), "it is fear of apprehension occurring when a learner is expected to perform in the target language" (Meliyani et al., 2022, p.2). Thus, it is paramount that the teachers ensure that each student has the chance to challenge themselves, improve, and grow out of such form of anxiety. To do so, "according to Brown (cited in Ghermaoui, 2019), there are these following aspects or components that can be considered to measure students' speaking ability: (a) pronunciation; (b) fluency; (c) vocabulary; (d) grammar;

(e) discourse features (cohesion, sociolinguistics appropriateness, etc); (f) task (accomplishing the objective of the task is closely dependent on comprehension)" (Afriani and Utami, 2021 cited in Meliyani et al., 2022, p.2). When students are closely monitored, personalised exercises can be assigned, carefully considering specific class dynamics that might present some students overriding others or belittling them for the mistakes made.

Since speaking is an important part for the evaluation of competences, classes ought to prioritise it as much as possible, developing an environment as talkative and communicative as possible. On the other hand, given that speaking is assumed to be the most stressful skill among the four language skills, Fauzi and Asi (2023, p.264) detail the variety of entangling feelings that are set in motion: "emotional states are triggered by a wide range of motivational, attitude, self-confidence, risk-taking, and anxiety-related psychological variables. This all means that such psychological variables cannot be hindered in using the language for communication, especially the learners' anxiety variable". In order to understand this specific problem in FL communication, several scholars have investigated how impactful anxiety in second and foreign language learning could be. For example, Latif (2015) and Karatas et al. (2016) found out that there is a correlation between anxiety of English-speaking learners and how long they have studied that foreign language (Fauzi and Asi, 2023).

According to studies on the Indonesian context: "students experience anxiety when speaking English in the classroom because they don't know enough words, aren't ready, are afraid of making mistakes, and unwilling their classmates to laugh at them. […] Of all studies in Indonesia related to the anxiety of speaking English aforementioned mostly looked into the anxiety in terms of psychological and linguistic factors, but not specific to relate with variable such as gender and number of years for learning the target language with the anxiety itself" (Fauzi, and Asi, 2023, p.265). Being aware of the different types of anxiety in foreign languages communication, I tried my best in class, while volunteering, to make everyone feels comfortable in class, to be as friendly as possible and to encourage speaking, even if sometimes it was difficult to make every student join and participate equally in the discussions and conversations because of shyness or fear of speaking in front of people.

In accordance with Horwitz et al. (1986) and with Tian and Mahmud (2018), gender can also affect participation and anxiety: "female students were more anxious than male in speaking

English in terms of communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation; but not in the test anxiety. […] Therefore, this finding is to confirm Tian and Mahmud's (2018) research data that the anxiety is caused not merely by learner's language proficiency, but the familiarity of learners to speak with his or her audience is also able to control psychological factors of nervousness such as shyness and self-confidence. Again, in this study female students are also marked a bit more anxious from the fear of negative evaluation than male" (Fauzi and Asi, 2023, p.271).

Meliyani et al. (2022) as detailed in their paper titled "An Exploration of Indonesian EFL Learners' Speaking Anxiety", argue that there are some different factors affecting FLA (foreign language anxiety) including assertiveness. They argue that students "got nervous when the teacher was being too assertive and demanding on them" (Meliyani et al., 2022, p.7). Another factor is the so-called "teacher's method of calling" as some students involved in the research stated that they "startled when the teacher randomly chose one of them to speak up or answer a question individually. One of them reported that she would even forget things to say due to her anxiety" (Meliyani et al., 2022, p.7). Furthermore, to be "mocked" by friends in the classroom is seen to be one of the major sources of anxiety: "Most of the interviewees stated that the other classmates showed unpleasant manner as if unintentionally making errors in speaking English is something that they could laugh at. They confessed that their classmates often laughed, mocked, and even shouted at them but not in a motivating way." (Meliyani et al., 2022, p.9). Other factors that increase the speaking anxiety in learners can be found in lack of "self-confidence, inadequate support to practice English speaking" (Meliyani et al., 2022).

To conclude, it is possible to say that the anxiety in speaking English is inevitable for all the learners, even for learners that already acquired an intermediate level of learning but, considering the Indonesian context, Fauzi and Asi argue that: "it is known that typical Indonesian learners of English have a fairly high level of apprehension when speaking the language. This is due to the fact that English is only used when they learn that language in the classroom, rather than using it in general situation" (Fauzi and Asi, 2023, p.273).

Being aware that pupils might experience these anxiety problems in speaking, I avoided putting any pressure on them, and I encouraged all the students to participate freely and equally. However, some of the challenges faced concerned how to ensure shy and silent kids' participation since the

more outgoing and talkative ones tended to take up all the space. I refrained from forcing any student while encouraging them with a smile or a look to make them feel at ease in voicing their opinions and actively participating in the exercises, and, more broadly, in the class dynamics.

As Koch and Terrell noticed: “oral dramas and oral presentation in front of the classroom are the activities that produce anxiety the most. They also noted that being called on to respond orally can produce anxiety. They are also afraid of being judged and negatively evaluated by the teachers and peers which exposed their lacks” (Meliyani et al., 2022, p.3). Therefore, I refrained from putting them on the spot unless they did raise their hands to intervene in the discussion during my classes and this brought the class to have a better and more relaxed environment in the class: also the outcomes were positive.

V. Chapter 4 – Findings, Strengths, Weaknesses and Future Perspectives

This chapter presents and analyses the main findings emerging from my personal experience, with particular attention to the interviews conducted with local teachers at Jet Centre. The analysis aims to assess the contribution of my role as a volunteer within the educational context of this Centre, while identifying the main strengths and weaknesses. Drawing on both personal reflection and the feedback expressed by the participants, the chapter further considers the broader implications of this job and how volunteering as a complementary resource may evolve the teaching system in the present and future in the international scenario.

5.1 Analysis of questionnaires and interviews

The interviews I conducted with the teachers at Jet Centre provide further insight into my role and contribution in this international educational context.

The questionnaire is divided into an Introduction, seven main sections (Sections A-G), and a Closing section. The Introduction and the Closing sections are meant to make the interviewees feel comfortable by explaining the purpose of the interview and thanking them for their participation. Sections A-G are the focus of the research and address different aspects of teaching and learning.

More specifically, I decided to conduct *semi-structured* interviews with the local English teachers at Jet Centre whom I considered my colleagues for that limited period. The semi-structured interview has an open structure and allows the interviewer to rephrase, require more explanation when needed, rise new queries and reflections. Indeed, I combined predetermined questions with unexpected ones, retaining some flexibility in the conversation. Depending on the participants' responses, I could ask follow-up questions or explore specific points in greater detail. In the introduction section, I usually opened the interview by greeting the participants and thanking them for taking part voluntarily. A typical introduction was the following:

"Hello Ms/Mr, thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. The aim of this study is to explore teachers' perspectives on my experience as a volunteer English teacher in this context.

Your answers will be used for academic purposes only and will be anonymised. There are no right or wrong answers – I am interested in your honest opinions and experiences."

There are two main aspects to highlight in the introduction section: The first concerns anonymity and confidentiality. The participants' identities won't be disclosed in the thesis to allow them to express their opinions on my experience and about volunteering as freely as possible.

The second point from the introduction is that *there are no right or wrong answers*. Since I was genuinely interested in understanding how my presence and contribution had been perceived, by this statement I pointed out that the purpose of the interviews was to explore the teachers' opinions and feelings rather than to judge them or evaluate whether their answers were correct.

Moving forward from the introductory part, there are seven sections that constitute the core subjects of the questionnaire. Every section includes a few questions that help to comprehend the participants' perspective as teachers and their role as part of Jet Centre.

- Section A – Background information

Section A focuses on the participants' professional background and their role in the school. The two questions were:

1. *Can you briefly describe your role in the school?*
2. *How long have you been teaching English in this school?*

The answers showed some differences in terms of roles and the amount of time they had been working at the Centre, from part-time to full-time positions. Furthermore, all the teachers I interviewed had joined the Centre relatively recently, resulting in a limited experience ranging from a few months to approximately two years. This suggests that the teaching team itself was quite new and filled with young professionals.

- Section B – Perceptions of Volunteer Teaching

Section B focused on the role of a volunteer in the school:

1. *How would you describe the role of volunteer teachers in the school?*
2. *What do you think are the main benefits of having volunteer teachers?*

Analysing the answers to these questions, the main point that stands out is increasing students' engagement in the classroom. Furthermore, the teachers referred to the volunteer's role in supporting them during classes and contributing to class delivery. Having a volunteer in the class was perceived as a way of making lessons more dynamic and enjoyable. One answer that I found particularly relevant referred to several benefits of working with a volunteer, including the possibility to "*discuss about the learning process; learn from the volunteer; talk about the teaching method and about communicative interactions".*

This answer is particularly interesting for my analysis because it suggests that the presence of a volunteer may not only benefit students but may also create opportunities to share opinions between teachers and volunteer assistants, who may have different teaching methods and approaches that can therefore become topics for discussion and mutual learning.

- Section C – Evaluation of My Teaching Experience

While Section B dealt with volunteering in general, Section C shifted the focus to my own experience at Jet Centre. The questions were:

1. *How would you describe my experience as a volunteer teacher in your school? What aspects of my teaching did you find most effective?*
2. *Were there any particular lessons or activities that stood out to you? (Can you give me an example?)*

The different answers highlighted a range of positive aspects, from *"very nice for flexibility"* to *"refreshment for students",* particularly in relation to encouraging students to speak more. Overall, the teachers agreed that my presence in the school was positive and frequently mentioned my active interaction with the students and my focus on speaking activities. One answer that particularly caught my attention is the following: *"helpful as students are not used to talk with foreigners and this boosted their confidence".*

Most teachers referred to speaking activities as the most useful part of my contribution. Some participants also mentioned the opportunity for students to hear and interact with a different accent. This suggests that direct communication with a foreign volunteer gave students new forms of exposure, different from their usual class experience. My contribution acted as a window into

a more realistic use of English, allowing students to practise the language in a context closer to real-life communication.

- Section D – Teaching Approach and Methodology

Section D focused on my teaching approach and methodology. The questions were:

1. *Did you notice any differences between my teaching approach and that of local teachers?*
2. *In your opinion, how communicative or interactive were my lessons?*
3. *What types of activities did you observe in my teaching?*

In this section, I wanted to receive real feedback on my teaching approach from teachers who had more experience in the local educational context and who had observed my interaction with the pupils during lessons. The teachers generally agreed that my teaching method differed from the ones they normally used in classes. One teacher replied to my question as follows: "*the teachers in Indonesia tend to explain more the tasks and the materials compared to you".*

- Section E – Challenges and Limitations

Section E outlines the challenges I faced and possible areas of improvement in my teaching method. The questions were:

1. *What challenges do you think I faced as a volunteer teacher in this context?*
2. *Were there any aspects of my teaching that could have been improved?*

I considered this section particularly constructive for my development as a teacher because it allowed the participants to provide critical feedback rather than focusing only on the positive aspects of my contribution. One of the main difficulties was communication. Since I did not speak any Indonesian, there were moments when communication with students became difficult, especially with young learners who could not understand everything I said in English. This occasionally resulted in misunderstandings and made lessons more challenging for both parties.

Another aspect mentioned by one of the teachers concerned my communication style, which at the beginning of the experience was described as *dry*. My communication was limited by my shyness and nervousness; indeed, the teacher in question suggested that I should work on this aspect.

The answers in this section were particularly useful because they highlighted some of my own limits. My initial shyness and my lack of knowledge of Indonesian affected the interactions in classes. At the same time, these difficulties were part of the process of adapting to a new cultural environment.

- Section F – Impact on Students

Section F focused on the perceived impact of my presence on the students. The questions are:

1. *What impact do you think my presence had on the students?*
2. *Did you notice any changes in students' motivation or participation?*

Boosting confidence in speaking English was one of the aspects that teachers noticed. Overall, they perceived the presence of a foreign volunteer as having a positive impact on students, particularly in relation to their willingness to communicate in English.

One of the teachers outlined the following: *I saw that they (the students) were trying to speak full English – not mixed English and Indonesian.*

I consider this observation particularly important because it suggests that students were encouraged to move outside their usual linguistic comfort zone. When communicating with me, they could not rely on Indonesian to complete sentences or explain concepts. As a result, they had to make a greater effort to find alternative ways using their own words in English.

Apart from confidence and communication, the teachers' answers also suggested that students appeared more motivated and interested during classes because of the presence of a foreign volunteer. This new element led them to interact with someone from a different linguistic and cultural background and contributed to their participation and curiosity.

- Section G – Reflection and Future Perspectives

The final section of the interview focused on reflection and possible future developments. The questions were:

1. *What do you think volunteer teachers can learn from this kind of experience?*
2. *What advice would you give to future volunteer teachers?*
3. *How could collaboration between local teachers and volunteers be improved?*

One of the main limitations identified by several teachers was the short-term nature of the volunteering experiences. According to the participants, effective collaboration between volunteers and local teachers requires time. If volunteers stay only for a short period of time, it can be difficult to establish a strong and consistent working relationship and develop a shared teaching approach.

Another point that emerged was the lack of clearly defined roles. When a volunteer arrives at the school, there may be limited information about what they are expected to do and how they should participate in lessons. This lack of organisation may create uncertainty for local teachers as well.

In relation to this issue, one teacher made an observation that I consider particularly useful: "*Local teachers can be the bridge between students and volunteers, but the volunteers have to observe first the delivery of the classes made by teachers."*

This comment suggests a possible way of improving future collaboration. Before actively participating in teaching, volunteers could spend some time observing local teachers and becoming familiar with their teaching methods, the way of approaching the students and classroom routines. Local teachers could act as a starting point while the volunteers can integrate their support and improvements, if possible.

Closing the interview

At the end of the interview, I thanked the participants for their time and contribution. I generally concluded the interview with a sentence such as: *Thank you for your time and for sharing your insights.*

Overall, the interviews with the teachers at Jet Centre suggest that the presence of a volunteer can make meaningful contributions to the classroom by creating additional opportunities for students to communicate in English without relying on their native language. At the same time, organisational limitations have been highlighted. Both volunteers and local teachers would benefit from receiving clearer information before the volunteering experience begins, particularly regarding the volunteer's role, responsibilities, and contribution in classes.

Furthermore, some answers put emphasis on the value of international volunteering not concerning students alone. The experience can create opportunities for exchange between local teachers and volunteers, allowing both sides to confront different teaching methods, perspectives

and classroom activities. Based on my personal experience and the feedback collected through the questions, I would suggest a more structured plan for improving collaboration among the professional figures in classrooms.

Despite the limitations identified throughout the interviews, my experience at Jet Centre was extremely positive on a personal level. I felt welcomed and gradually became part of the school community. The difficulties I encountered, including communication barriers and my initial shyness, were also part of the learning process. For this reason and considering the feedback I received through theses interviews and the reactions I observed among students and teachers, I find this experience highly worthwhile for my development as a teacher.

5.2 Data triangulation

Data source triangulation involves gathering information from different groups of participants to obtain multiple perspectives on the phenomenon under investigation (Patton, 1999, p. 1195). In finding agreement or convergence in different data sources, the researcher can be more certain that they are accurately describing the phenomenon; converge across data sources helps to reduce threats to construct validity (Yin 2009, pp. 41, 115-116). At the same time, the purpose of data triangulation is not necessarily to find complete agreement between all sources, since differences and contradictions can also provide useful information and contribute to a deeper interpretation of the research context (Flick, 2022, pp. 652-664).

In relation to my time at Jet Centre in Indonesia, I considered three main sources of information: my personal perspective as a volunteer teacher, the perspectives of the local English teachers collected during the semi-structured interviews, and my direct observation of the students. These three perspectives allow me to look at my contribution from different angles and to make considerations on the overall experience thoroughly.

Starting from my own perspective, I consider my time at Jet Centre to have been highly positive and constructive. The organisation responsible for the volunteering programme, Volpro, supported the process from the initial online interview to the final stages of my stay, while the teachers and staff at Jet Centre were welcoming and willing to help me adapt to the new school environment. As already mentioned at the end of the previous paragraph, this experience gave me the opportunity to improve my skills as a teacher and enrich my method given the constant

exchange with teachers and the students' reactions. I reflected on my approach to the classroom and learned how to overcome my weaknesses.

The teachers' perspective, analysed in the previous section through the semi-structured interviews, generally supports my personal perspective, although it also provides a more critical point of view. The teachers particularly highlighted the positive contribution in speaking activities, the opportunity for students to interact with a foreign English speaker, and the different communicative approach I brought to the classroom. At the same time, they identified some criticalities with my initial communication style, the relatively short duration of the volunteering experience and the lack of organisation and role establishment for volunteers. Their feedback is valuable for this triangulation because it does not simply confirm my personal perspective, but it also introduces aspects that I might not be able to identify alone.

The third element concerns the students. Since I did not conduct formal interviews with them, I cannot provide recorded data in the same way as I did with local teachers. Nevertheless, my direct observation during lessons and informal interactions provides another element to consider. At the beginning, some students appeared shy when communicating with me, mostly because they were not accustomed to interacting with foreign speakers. Over time, however, I noticed a gradual change in their behaviour towards me. Some students showed their willingness to communicate in English with me and approached me outside the classroom, for example in the corridors, to continue conversations or simply practise speaking.

Bringing these different sources together provides a complete picture of my contribution at Jet Centre. The mentioned perspectives converge in identifying communication and speaking practice as some of the most significant aspects of my presence there. On the other hand, the triangulation also highlights important limitations concerning communication barriers, the organisation of volunteer roles and the short-term nature of this experience. These comparisons help me move beyond the overall judgment of the experience as positive or negative. Instead, I recognise that the willingness of the students to interact with me could coexist with difficulties in communication, just as a welcoming environment coexists with unclear teaching responsibilities.

Through triangulation I developed a more balanced understanding of the potential of volunteer teaching in this educational context.

5.3 Strengths of Volunteer Language Teaching

One of the main strengths of volunteer language teaching is that it can create opportunities for learning not only for students but also for volunteers themselves. Local teachers may also benefit from the volunteer's contribution and support, while the volunteer learns through class activities and everyday interactions. In my case, I had the opportunity to contribute to lessons, but I also received guidance and feedback that helped me reflect on my teaching and how to adjust my approach in an unfamiliar environment. From this perspective I see volunteering as an important experience to examine my personal interest in teaching through participation, rather than considering it only as a possible future profession. The personal expectations of the volunteer are considered alongside the responsibilities of working with others; this approach develops teamwork towards common educational goals. The volunteer sees themselves as not a single individual with their own perspectives and abilities but as part of a system where all the participants contribute to the delivery of the lessons and support each other in complex situations that may come up in all the aspects of teaching in classes. This kind of involvement is not limited to enriching professional identity. It also includes cultural understanding and responsibility towards others.

Working in an unfamiliar environment can also create an opportunity to question assumptions that usually go unnoticed. In their study of an international service-learning programme in South Africa, Czop Assaf et al. (2019) describe how prospective teachers began to reconsider their beliefs about language and cultural differences. Discussions and guided reflection were part of this process, although the authors note that some simplified views remained. I find this a useful way of understanding personal cultural enrichment: not simply learning about another culture but becoming aware of how my own background shapes the way I interpret it. At the same time, I realised that my beliefs are not the only possible starting point for understanding a new culture.

A further potential benefit concerns the value that students themselves bring to the classroom. I recognise that students are people with something valuable to contribute, rather than viewing them only in terms of the language and skills they still need to develop. Indeed, during lessons they explain their interests, aspects of their culture and habits, whether they are aware of it or not. In this perspective, the volunteer would become a learner too while still maintaining his professional and guidance role on the students in the classroom.

This possibility also changes how I understand the relationship between helping and learning. Volunteering is often approached in terms of what a person can offer, but I would ask who decides what is useful and whose priorities guide this contribution. The will to do something meaningful can become an opportunity to consider the effects of my choices on others. In this sense, personal growth involves not only feeling satisfied with my work, but also developing a more informed understanding of what responsible participation requires.

Another aspect worth considering is what happens when the volunteer returns home. The educational value of volunteering is, indeed, not limited to the period spent abroad. A volunteer may later reconsider familiar classroom practices, use different teaching materials, or consider whether the examples used in lessons reflect students' different backgrounds. The value lies in using what was learned to improve later decisions, rather than treating the stay as an isolated episode.

Furthermore, living abroad can change a person's view of the world as you move to a different country to live and work with locals. My time at one school cannot represent an entire country, but it can provide a starting point for further questions. I therefore see one wider strength of volunteer teaching in its capacity to encourage continued learning: about the profession, about the people involved and about the assumptions I bring to both.

5.4 Weaknesses and Critical Issues

The difficulties of volunteer language teaching cannot be reduced to the challenges of travelling or adapting to an unfamiliar distant culture. As a volunteer, I was not only visiting another country but also taking part in the daily work of a school. This involved responsibility towards the students and local teachers. In discussing these responsibilities, I distinguish between the difficulties identified at Jet Centre and wider concerns. Not all these concerns emerged from my interviews, but they provide useful questions through which I examine scenarios.

One issue concerns the relationship between language ability and teaching preparation. An overseas volunteer teaching programme may not require teaching qualifications or previous

teaching experience. This raises questions about whether English proficiency and enthusiasm are sufficient preparation for classroom responsibilities. I would not argue that volunteers must be experienced teachers. However, I consider it important that they should have access to appropriate supervision and their tasks should reflect their preparation. Learning through participation does not mean being responsible for something that one is not ready to manage.

A less visible concern is the effort involved in hosting someone. In the study of organisations in Peru, Lough et al. (2011) found that volunteers could provide support while also requiring training support and resources. Especially when volunteers serve for shorter periods, demands on host organisations may be more intense as they are required to orient each new volunteer regularly. Applied to a school, this could be extended to the time needed to explain class schedules, organise tasks and supervise volunteers. My interviews do not establish that I increased the teachers' workload at Jet Centre. However, I recognise that the guidance I received required some effort from others. The teachers' comments about short stays also invite consideration of longer periods for volunteering programmes. From my perspective, the question is not only how long someone stays but whether their work connects with what came before and what will follow. Without connection, successive visits could become separate activities rather than integrated parts of an educational plan. Another critical point concerns whose priorities guide the educational programme. The previous section discussed opportunities for personal and professional growth, but they should not become the only reason for deciding classroom activities. A proposed task should respond to the students' educational needs. The desire to make a good contribution should not take priority on school's decisions.

These concerns lead me to distinguish between respect from being friendly and willing to adapt. In my opinion, respect involves accepting limits: being prepared to follow other teachers' instructions and accepting their guidance. It also means that there is the risk of reconsidering an activity if not appropriate, even if I invested time or enthusiasm in preparing it. This means that volunteers should avoid an overly authoritative approach.

In conclusion, I would not suggest that these difficulties can always be resolved through patience alone. Some require preparation and supervision, while others concern the priority given to the organised educational programme. My time at Jet Centre helped me to focus on what makes a contribution appropriate, rather than assuming that the willingness to help is enough.

5.5 Future Perspectives and Possible Improvements

Volunteering has a key role in building stronger and more supportive communities. The future development of volunteering will depend on the ability of organisations, communities and institutions to respond to a changing social, technological, and demographic environment. One of the main challenges regards adapting traditional volunteering models to the expectations and lifestyles of younger generations, while maintaining the long-term commitment and social value of voluntary work.

The first area for improvement is that of digitalisation. Digital platforms and social media can facilitate a lot of aspects involved in the process, such as recruitment, coordination, and communication of volunteers. Online volunteering is another key factor as it can also make participation possible for individuals who cannot regularly attend activities in person because of geographical, professional, or personal constraints. This adapts easily to the profile of prospective language teachers who are willing to gain experience as volunteers. However, organisations should ensure that digital volunteering complements rather than replaces direct human interaction, particularly in sectors such as social care and community support.

A second important perspective is the greater participation among young people. Schools, universities, and youth organisations could strengthen their cooperation with voluntary associations through internships, community projects, and service-learning programmes. Such initiatives could introduce young people to volunteering at an early age while allowing them to develop transferable skills, including teamwork, communication, and problem-solving.

Another area to pay attention to is volunteer training and professional development. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, the preparation of volunteers before starting their experience may not be sufficient to work with vulnerable individuals or in complex social environment. Supervision and adequate division of tasks are fundamental in this sense. Volunteer organisations could also provide more standardised training programmes before and during the volunteering period. This preparation could help volunteers better understand their responsibilities and feel more confident when entering a new working environment.

Recognition and retention represent another significant challenge. Volunteer organisations may improve long-term participation by recognising volunteers' contributions through certificates,

skills portfolios, references, regular feedback and opportunities to take on more demanding or responsible roles over time. Recognition should not necessarily be financial; rather, it can communicate that volunteers' contributions are valued.

Future volunteering programmes should become more inclusive and accessible. Participation should not depend too heavily on a person's economic situation, age, background or personal circumstances. Practical barriers, such as travel costs, limited information or rigid schedules, could be broken down to make volunteering more accessible to a wider range of participants.

At the same time, accessibility should be accompanied by better organisation. Future programmes could benefit from clearer information before departure, more structured preparation and a precise definition of volunteers' roles. This could also include closer communication between volunteer organisations and local schools and help to make the volunteers' contribution more connected with the school's needs.

Another important aspect concerns continuity. As emerged from the interviews, short-term volunteering can make it difficult to build stable collaboration between professionals. Future programmes should draw greater attention to how the volunteers' work can be connected to that of previous and future volunteers. In this way, the programme would create continuity over time, leaving the volunteers to choose whether to opt for a short- or long-term programme.

From a policy perspective, stronger cooperation between governments, non-profit organisations, schools, and other local actors could provide more sustainable support for volunteering. Public institutions can contribute through funding and training, while organisations can provide expertise and involve local communities.

Overall, the future of volunteering should not be measured only by the number of volunteers. Rather, the focus should be given to the quality, continuity and organisation of the experience. In my view, future developments should aim to create forms of volunteering that are better prepared, more inclusive and more connected to local needs. Future research could therefore examine how digitalisation, youth engagement, volunteer training, organisational support, and recognition mechanisms influence both volunteer retention and the social impact of volunteering.

VI. Conclusions

Looking back at my experience at Jet Centre, one of the main points that emerged from this research is that volunteer teaching should be understood primarily as a form of collaboration. The interviews, my observations and reflections showed that volunteers can create useful opportunities for communication and exchange, but their contribution depends greatly on how they become part of an educational environment that already has its own teachers, methods and needs. Integration is possible when all the participants of the volunteer programme, namely the institutions, school, local teachers and the volunteer, are willing to do their part each. When coordination stays focused on its goals and is fully supported, it creates an environment that runs smoothly, where all parties communicate to solve issues and improve areas considered weak. Being involved in the field of teaching requires preparation and responsibility towards learners' education.

Communication was also the aspect of my contribution that teachers considered most relevant. What emerged from the findings of my interviews is that teachers particularly valued the additional opportunities for students to speak English with someone from a different linguistic and cultural background. However, these opportunities cannot be interpreted as evidence that the volunteer automatically improves students' language proficiency. What emerged clearly was the possibility of creating a different communicative situation, in which students were encouraged to speak English spontaneously. This kind of interaction can develop gradually; as happened to me, the volunteer may experience some difficulties, especially at the beginning. Volunteers and students will need time to build affinity and connection. The volunteer must reflect critically on their work, refining their approach over time.

Another important point I draw from my research is therefore the value of the guidance provided by local teachers to volunteers. They help volunteers understand how to participate appropriately and interact with students. The interviews particularly highlighted the importance of observing local teaching practices before taking a more active role in the classroom. From this perspective, collaboration is indeed one of the conditions that can determine the quality of the experience. The difficulties I encountered in the process became part of my development as a teacher and the exchange with local teachers helped me recognise my limits and reconsider my initial expectations.

The findings also suggest some practical implications for future volunteer teaching programmes. Clearer roles, initial observation of local teaching practices and greater attention to preparation and continuity could make collaboration more effective for both teachers and volunteers. At the same time, the present study remains limited to a single educational context, a short volunteering period and the perspectives of the teachers directly involved, while students were not formally interviewed. For this reason, the findings cannot be generalised to volunteer language teaching in Indonesia as a whole. Instead, this research points to a practical starting point for development: volunteering can be more effective when enthusiasm is supported by clear roles, guidance from local teachers and continuity with the school's existing work.

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