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"Volunteers in the EFL classroom: supporting public institutions in Ecuador."

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Quito, 21 de noviembre de 2024

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MAESTRÍA EN PEDAGOGÍA DEL INGLÉS COMO LENGUA
EXTRANJERA**

**INTONATION OF QUESTIONS AND REQUESTS IN LOWER
INTERMEDIATE ADULT EFL STUDENTS**

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ABSTRACT

This article highlights the work of North American Volunteers carried out through international organizations in the classrooms of five Public High Schools in the Ecuadorian Pacific Coast. The aim of this article is to provide more information to the scarce existing one and provide outcomes and supporting literature that focusses on the work performed by volunteers. A descriptive and qualitative research was carried out through non-participant observation. Five English classes in which volunteers supported Ecuadorian teachers were observed. This data was analyzed and reported, concluding that it is an assistance that students enjoy, and teachers support, since they agree that exposure to a native speaker helped learners with the pronunciation and practice of spoken language.

Keywords: volunteers, teaching English as a foreign language, pronunciation, practice, English, native speakers.

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**VOLUNTEERS IN THE EFL CLASSROOM: SUPPORTING PUBLIC
INSTITUTIONS IN ECUADOR.**

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RESUMEN

Este artículo destaca el trabajo de voluntarios norteamericanos realizado a través de organismos internacionales en las aulas de cinco Colegios Públicos de la costa del Ecuador. El objetivo de este artículo es aportar más información a la escasa existente y proporcionar resultados y literatura de apoyo que se centre en el trabajo realizado por los voluntarios. Se realizó una investigación descriptiva y cualitativa mediante observación no participante. Cinco clases de inglés fueron observadas en las que voluntarios apoyaron a docentes ecuatorianos. Estos datos fueron analizados y reportados, concluyendo que es una ayuda que los estudiantes disfrutan y los docentes apoyan, ya que coinciden en que la exposición a un hablante nativo ayudó a los estudiantes con la pronunciación y práctica del lenguaje hablado.

Palabras clave: voluntarios, enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera, pronunciación, práctica, inglés, nativo hablantes.

INTRODUCTION

This article explores the increasing role of volunteers in supporting public educational systems, specifically focusing on language teaching in the Ecuadorian Pacific Coast. Since there is scarcity of information regarding the work volunteers do, this article aims to present this information and make it, in some way, more accessible and known.

In Ecuador, the involvement of volunteers in the education sector has significantly expanded through collaborations with the Ministry of Education and various international agencies. According to an official source, there are currently 106 volunteers active throughout the country (Embajada de los Estados Unidos en Ecuador, n.d.). This post-pandemic growth aligns with national efforts to enhance second language acquisition from an early age. This article explores the dynamics within EFL classrooms in 5 public institutions of the Ecuadorian Pacific Coast, emphasizing the collaborative efforts between teachers and volunteers (Ministerio de Educación, 2012).

The following objectives will be addressed:

General Objective: Describe the contributions and impact of North American volunteers within TEFL classes in 5 Public High Schools in the Ecuadorian Pacific Coast.

Specific Objectives:

Identify the specific benefits of volunteer involvement.
Report the results of interviews and class observations.
Analyze the impact of volunteer involvement on student language proficiency and engagement.

This article synthesizes and presents the critical perspectives of US volunteers, Ecuadorian EFL teachers and students regarding the support provided by language teaching volunteers.

The following research questions guided this article:

1. How do volunteers support educational institutions in Ecuador?
2. What role do volunteers play in the EFL classroom?
3. How do EFL students and teachers perceive the support provided by the volunteers?

Government initiatives to promote English language learning include the implementation of a standardized English curriculum that emphasizes communicative competence, with the goal of students achieving a B1 level by the time they graduate from high school (Acuerdo Ministerial, 2014). Despite these efforts, challenges remain, such as insufficient teacher proficiency with the language and limited professional development opportunities. National exams have shown that many teachers fall below the expected B2 proficiency level, underscoring the need for continuous improvement and support. (El Comercio 2016)

Volunteers, often native English speakers, had contributed to schools to achieve their goals. Volunteering, defined as offering time and skills without financial compensation (Merriam-Webster, 2023) provided educational benefits, including improvement of academic performance and increased student motivation. However, the sustainability of volunteer programs and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on virtual teaching, presented ongoing challenges.

The co-teaching model, which involves native and non-native English-speaking teachers, offers advantages in addressing diverse student needs by combining authentic language use with local cultural knowledge. The pandemic necessitated a rapid transition to virtual teaching, leading to adaptations in educational policies and the use of digital tools, which facilitated collaboration with international volunteers.

Volunteer classroom assistants have had an impact on English teaching in Ecuador's public education system, reducing teacher workload, introducing innovative teaching methods, and enhancing student engagement. However, challenges such as limited program duration and volunteer inexperience persist. This article delves into these dynamics, underscoring the role of volunteers in educational development and proposing strategies for maximizing their effectiveness.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Volunteering in classrooms has become an increasing practice for its benefits both for students and for the educational community in general. This theoretical framework examines the concepts, theories and previous studies related to the importance of volunteering in the educational context, providing a foundation to understand of its impact and relevance.

The role of volunteers in education, particularly in language learning, has been widely recognized. Studies by MacIntyre et al., (2014) and Ryan et al. (2000) emphasize the importance of volunteer engagement in fostering a supportive learning environment. Volunteers can provide individualized attention, diversify teaching approaches, and relieve teachers of some administrative burdens. Their presence in the classroom has been linked to improved student outcomes and enhanced teacher satisfaction (Ehrich et al., 2011).

In Ecuador, second language acquisition has been gaining relevance not only with new initiatives of the central government and various ministries that focused attention on the development of the second language learning from an early age, but also with new agreements among different organizations (Redacción Social, 2014). Ecuadorian teachers, motivated by these initiatives, have not only been part of several volunteer support programs, but they have also shared their experience and knowledge making this a two-way experience where teachers have been able to reinforce their language teaching skills and abilities and volunteers have had the opportunity to learn from our language and culture. In addition, the government has focused on the development of the foreign language learning, participating in several voluntary support agreements in order to expose young Ecuadorian to native speakers. (Secretaría General de Comunicación de la Presidencia, 2018).

Ecuador's public education system has made advances in promoting English language learning, recognizing its importance in global communication and economic development. (Redacción Sociedad, 2014) That is why, together with different international organizations; (Secretaría General de Comunicación de la Presidencia, 2018). National Government is working in achieving a better level of English when students finish their last high school grade.

The Ministry of Education has implemented a standardized English curriculum (National English Curriculum Guidelines 2012) across public schools, emphasizing communicative competence, with the help of native speakers as volunteers to promote this competence. Also, regarding English proficiency goals, students are expected to achieve a B1 level (Intermediate) by the end of their high school education, in accordance with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (National English Curriculum Guidelines 2012). For students to have the opportunity to get to the superior Education with no second language disadvantage.

Initiatives to improve the quality of English teachers include training programs, certifications, and continuous professional development opportunities, have been offered by the ministry, but they don't seem enough because not all the teachers could be part of

them. Despite these efforts, numerous challenges remain, alongside opportunities for improvement and innovation.

Many public school English teachers lack sufficient English proficiency as shown in the result of the last national exams for Language Teachers. Ecuador barely obtained 46.57 points out of 100. (Machado J. 2019) The national exams aim to evaluate the English proficiency and pedagogical skills of teachers to improve the overall quality of English language education. The exams typically cover language proficiency (listening, speaking, reading, writing) and teaching methodologies. A significant proportion of English teachers in Ecuador have been found to fall below the expected B2 proficiency level according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). It is a reality that Ecuador lives, but that has been improving not only with different programs, volunteers, and incentive courses; but teachers themselves have sought tools in which not only their command of the second language improves, but also the level of their students reaches what is requested by the government.

English Education in Ecuador

The pandemic forced a rapid transition to virtual teaching and not only in education but the world getting used to virtuality. In learning, these trends are manifest in what is sometimes called "learner-centered" or "student-centered" design. This is more than just adapting for different learning styles or allowing the user to change the font size and background color; it is the placing of the control of learning itself into the hands of the learner. (Stephen D. 2005)

“The extent to which English teachers have the proper pedagogical and English language skills to lead a classroom can be determined in large part by two factors: whether they have a teaching degree in English, and whether or not their language proficiency has been certified”. (Stanton et al., 2019. p. 11) There are two realities in Ecuador and according to Sarah Stanton and Ariel Fiszbein throughout Latin America, the teachers who studied English at the university and have extensive knowledge of the language and those who, because they knew English, were made teachers.

In the same way they mention: “Additionally, these two criteria are likely to be mutually reinforcing; teachers who have completed their degree in English education are also likely to have received significant instruction in English as part of their training, while those who have not completed a degree may not have had the same opportunities to build their English skills”. (Stanton et al., 2019. p. 11).

During pandemic educational policies were adapted to include online learning platforms and digital resources so students could continue with their learning process. Various platforms (Zoom, Google Classroom, Microsoft Teams) and digital resources (videos, applications, and interactive exercises) were used to teach English and for teacher to plan lessons. At the end, teachers had to learn on their own to use these platforms and straighten their English skills because of their commitment, virtual teaching became a tool to facilitate the collaboration with other schools and in this case with volunteers from other countries.

Volunteering is defined as an altruistic activity where individuals offer their time and skills without receiving financial compensation in return. (Merriam-Webster 2023). In the educational context, it refers to the participation of people in support activities within classrooms. (Brain, J. 1968).

Volunteer work as classroom assistants in Ecuador's public education system has an impact, especially in the teaching of English. Volunteers helped in education and offer additional support to teachers and students by contributing with their time and previous experiences to overcome different challenges in this new technology era. This role also addressed technological limitations and problems and took advantage of opportunities within the education system.

International volunteers in EFL classrooms in Ecuador

There has been extensive investigation on the co-teaching model that involves native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) and non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs), especially in EFL contexts. According to British Council (2016), this approach has several advantages including the help with the increasingly diverse learning needs and academic levels of students in one classroom, mixing authentic language from native speakers with local language and culture knowledge by non-natives and practicing pronunciation and intonation of words. Resulting in a good practice where the beneficiaries are students and teachers.

The impact of international volunteers in Ecuador is positive, forwarding to a sustainable work. Although according to Leslye Jeannette Womack (2012), there are certain parameters that volunteers must follow for their work to be more successful. "Interviews revealed that the impact of volunteer service was greatly influenced by service duration. Longer service commitments were reported to lead to better volunteer outcomes. In fact, 100% of organizations agreed that longer placements allow volunteers to adjust to new environments, build meaningful relationships, and create ties of mutual understanding" (Womack, 2012. p. 10) It has been shown time commitment not only helps volunteers to carry out their projects, but also to complete projects Therefore, some of the challenges faced during this research were the lack of time since the program was 6 months long, not allowing to complete everything planned.

Finally, a significant fact is that the "intentions and motivations of volunteers drastically impact the efficacy of volunteer service" (Womack, 2012. p. 11). Volunteers who are dedicated to doing their job have been seen to do better.

Support roles in the EFL classroom

"Co-teaching practice originated from concerted efforts to bring about collaboration between general and special education teachers to support students" ... ". "This practice was expanded to accommodate ESL teachers in their efforts to collaborate with

mainstream teachers” (British Council, 2016. p. 111) The initiative was born from being able to support teachers in the English area.

“Teachers are too often the servants of heads, advisers, researchers, textbooks, curriculum developers, examination boards or the ‘Department of Education’, among others. By adopting a research stance, teachers are liberating themselves from the control and command situation they often find themselves in.” (Hopkins, 2008. p.2) With the support of volunteers during this virtual and searching time, the role of the teacher has been more of a guide and moderator than it was seen before, which is neither bad nor good, but it does help to continue exploring alternative roles rather than the one of servants, observed by Hopkins (2008).

Also, in the same article, it is mentioned that: “teachers follow the specification of a curriculum or teaching strategy, but at the same time assess it critically”. (Hopkins, 2008. p.3) It is a very good suggestion that despite the processes we have already established, teachers with the support of volunteers can teach English from a more critical point and not just follow guidelines.

“Such curriculum proposals and teaching specifications are probably intelligent but are not necessarily correct. Their effectiveness should therefore be monitored by teachers in the classroom. By adopting this critical approach, by taking a research stance, the teacher is engaged not only in a meaningful professional development activity but is also engaged in a process of refining and becoming more autonomous in professional judgement”. (Hopkins, 2008. p.3)

As Hopkins mentions, these new practices help teachers develop on another level. Volunteer support helps them meet these goals and work collaboratively and hopefully, critically.

METHODOLOGY

Data in this study was collected through a mix-methods approach entailing interviews, field observations, journals and literature review. Interviews were conducted with participants from nonprofit volunteer organization in Ecuador, this study gathers data from a series of interviews and class observations conducted with participants. The data gathered in both highlights the outcomes of the program for teachers, volunteers, and students, offering valuable insights into the overall effectiveness and areas for improvement. A total of 20 interviews were conducted, of which 5 were with volunteers, 5 were with teachers, and 10 with students. Each interview focused on the participants' experiences, perceptions of the program, and suggestions for future improvements.

As for the observation of classes, 5 were directed. The observations covered key areas: preparation and punctuality, interaction with students, collaboration with teachers, initiative, problem-solving, and professionalism.

Since host organization disinclined to directly contribute to this study, and wanted to remain anonymous, information on the role in the volunteering experience was gathered through journal notes from the researcher's experience within the organization and a bibliographic research process. Data about the host organization was collected from the review of documents, organizational literature, and websites of current participating volunteering host organizations in Ecuador. Organizations were identified by using online search engines. Additionally, a literature review of previous related studies aided in interpreting and organizing data gathered from interviews, observation and journals.

Interviews

Interviews were scheduled via email, Invitations were sent to ten volunteers, five of them accepted to participate, teachers were contacted on a face-to-face visit to schools and students through their teachers.

Interviews with volunteers were conducted online, five written interviews were completed via email. A written interview questionnaire, consisting of ten general questions, was sent to and filled out by the volunteers. Teachers and students who participated in the interviews completed them at their schools. For the students, who were minors, consent letters were sent to their parents before the interviews took place. In total, five volunteers, five teachers, and ten students were interviewed.

Email request for interviews included a brief set of questions on satisfaction, content, and methodology. A major challenge of the study was the small sample size of host organization volunteers and teachers. Nonetheless, volunteers and teachers that agreed to an interview, all were exceedingly helpful and enthusiastic. To measure results, interviews were made at the end of the volunteering service (See Appendix A).

Interviews were scheduled and arranged through a series of emails and phone calls. Interviews were conducted at the participating schools, via zoom and email. The duration

of interviews ranged from ten to fifteen minutes. Most participants were eager to be part of this process.

The most crucial source of research instrumentation was the interview questionnaire (see Appendices A, B, and C). Volunteers' questionnaires referenced in this article were developed by the organization overseeing the volunteer program in which participants were involved. Within the organizational framework, the term "event" is employed to denote the set of training activities delivered to volunteers before they began their collaboration work with teachers, schools and students. Two versions of the questionnaire were used English and Spanish. The questionnaires consisted of five to eleven questions that served as a basic guide for interviews. The content of the interview questions derived from previous research and formats host volunteering organization uses. The questions focused on how host organizations did the job of recruiting volunteers and training them, how organizations deal with international volunteers, common challenges confronting the organization and the personal opinions of interviewees about why international volunteerism is often perceived as inefficient.

Conducting interviews posed significant challenges due to several factors. First, there were difficulties in relying on teachers to complete both their own interviews and those of the students in the schools where volunteers were working. Additionally, safety concerns related to the pandemic further complicated the interview process, as in-person interactions were limited to ensure the well-being of all participants.

Interviews were transcribed and edited after they were done, in order to analyze the data and identify common themes and general trends for data coding. Several themes were recognized and then organized into graphics and word clouds. Data were coded then entered into an Excel spread sheet in order to draw quantitative findings. A qualitative analysis of interview transcriptions served as a means of drawing conclusions from the challenges and successes.

Observations

Another key method for gathering data in this research was through non-participatory observations. Volunteer Observation Worksheet referenced in this study were developed by the organization overseeing the volunteer program. I, along with four other coworkers, conducted observations in classrooms where volunteers were working. These observations were aimed at assessing how volunteers seemed to value their service and interact with students and teachers. We systematically logged our observations, noting important behaviors, interactions, and teaching methods utilized by the volunteers. Additionally, we completed class observation forms to ensure consistency and thorough documentation. These forms allowed us to capture specific details about the classroom dynamics, such as the level of student engagement, volunteer-teacher collaboration, and the effectiveness of the lessons being delivered. By using these structured forms, we were able to objectively evaluate the volunteers' impact within the classroom environment.

Research journal

Casual conversation with retired volunteers were used to get raw feedback on the issues that bothered, excited, and challenged volunteers. The most useful discussions were informal group conversations in causal settings. The volunteers were aware of the present research project and were helpful in divulging any information they could. Discussions shed light on their true feelings about their service more effectively than a written survey or another form of evaluation. Data gained from conversations with volunteers was logged in a journal.

Journal notes helped evidence some of the suggested improvements volunteers highlighted and provided significant insight on the constrains of this kind of experiences.

Literature review

Brochures and Program Descriptions: Many organizations that send volunteers to teach in EFL contexts emphasize the benefits of immersion and cultural exchange. Volunteers often help address shortages of English teachers in rural or underserved areas. Brochures frequently mention the role of volunteers in enhancing language acquisition through authentic interaction and exposure to native or near native English proficiency.

Online sources: Often discuss how volunteers provide diverse perspectives and contribute to a more global classroom environment. They often offer support to local teachers, assist with pronunciation, and foster conversational skills.

PARTICIPANTS

In this article we have several participants, the volunteers who are the ones who are donating their time with the teachers. Teachers of the English area from different provinces of the Ecuadorian Pacific Coast and their students.

Volunteers

Detailed general description of the participating volunteers

- a) Volunteer number one is a return volunteer, she came to Ecuador in the sixties. She is a teacher in the United States and is around her sixties. She has a high-level Spanish.
- b) Volunteer number two is a professional woman retired; she gives private lessons. She used to be a high school language teacher in the United States and is around her sixties. She has a low-level Spanish.
- c) Volunteer number three is an evacuated volunteer, he came to Ecuador before the pandemic and had to be evacuated. He wanted to finish his service. He is around his twenties. He has a high-level Spanish.
- d) Volunteer number four is a male private lessons teacher. He is around thirties. He has a bachelor's in education and a low-level Spanish.
- e) Volunteer number five is a PhD student. She wanted to volunteer for no longer than six months. She is around her twenties. She has a mid-level Spanish.

Teachers

Detailed general description of the participating teachers

- a) Teacher number one is a woman around her forties. She has a degree in education and a B2 certificate in English, her schedule is Monday through Friday 7am to 2pm in which she is responsible for 8th grades. She has 5 classes with around 30 to 40 students, and she has classes with all her groups every day for one period, she sees them every day.
- b) Teacher number two is a woman around her fifties. She has a degree in Biology and a B2 certificate in English, her schedule is Monday through Friday 7am to 2pm in which she is responsible for 9th grades. She has 5 classes with around 30 to 40 students, and she has classes with all her groups every day for one period, she sees them every day.

- c) Teacher number three is a man around his forties. He has a degree in Education and a B2 certificate in English, his schedule is Monday through Friday 7am to 2pm in which he is responsible for 11th grades. He has 5 classes with around 30 to 40 students, and he has classes with all his groups every day for one period, he sees them every day and also is working in the organization of Christmas festivities.
- d) Teacher number four is a woman around her seventies. She has a degree in Education and a B1 certificate in English her schedule is Monday through Friday 7am to 2pm in which she is responsible for 8th grades as well. She has 5 classes with around 30 to 40 students, and she has classes with all her groups every day for one period, she sees them every day.
- e) Teacher number five is a man around his forties. He has a degree in Music and a B2 certificate in English his schedule is Monday through Friday 7am to 2pm in which he is responsible for 12th grades. He has 5 classes with around 30 to 40 students, and he has classes with all his groups every day for one period, he sees them every day and also works as a music teacher.

Students

Detailed general description of the participating students.

- a) Student number one is a 13-year-old girl. She is a student in high school, and she said she wanted to participate on the interview because she enjoyed the experience.
- b) Student number two is a 14-year-old girl. She is a student in high school, and she said she wanted to participate on the interview because she wanted to help.
- c) Student number three is a 14-year-old girl. She is a student in high school, and she said she wanted to participate because she enjoyed the experience.
- d) Student number four is a 15-year-old girl. She is a student in high school, and she said she wanted to participate to help.
- e) Student number five is a 15-year-old girl. She is a student in high school, and she said she wanted to participate because she enjoyed the experience.
- f) Student number six is a 13-year-old boy. He is a student in high school, and he said he wanted to participate on the interview because he enjoyed the experience.
- g) Student number seven is a 14-year-old boy. He is a student in high school, and he said he wanted to participate on the interview because now he is friend with the volunteers.

- h) Student number eight is a 14-year-old boy. He is a student in high school, and he said he wanted to participate to help.
- i) Student number nine is a 16-year-old boy. He is a student in high school, and he said he wanted to participate because he learned from volunteers.
- j) Student number ten is a 16-year-old boy. He is a student in high school, and he said he wanted to participate because he liked to talk in English.

RESULTS

The results of the survey conducted among volunteers, teachers and students are presented in percentage tables and indicated that the communication and information provided prior to the event, as well as the organization and logistics of the training, and the support received during the volunteer experience was well delivered.

Overall, volunteers, teachers and students expressed satisfaction with this process of the volunteer work. Teachers indicated a likelihood of recommending similar volunteering opportunities to others. The time and duration, the resources and materials provided were deemed adequate for the completion of the volunteer work, and volunteers generally felt that safety measures and support during their service was adequate.

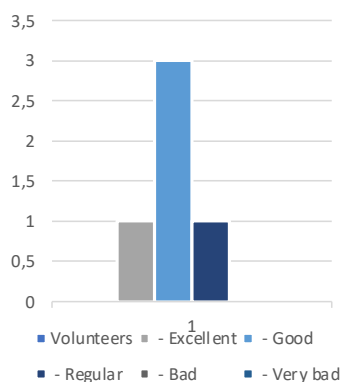
In terms of the qualitative data word clouds analysis revealed that the most frequently mentioned terms included "training," "time," and "updated." As for the work of volunteers' "fun" "invaluable" and "inspiring" Additionally, volunteers identified aspects they particularly enjoyed, such as interactions with students, their experiences in Ecuador, and collaboration with teachers.

Suggestions for enhancements included the involvement of more organizations, the implementation of longer programs, and increased exposure to various facets of the volunteering experience.

According to one volunteer, the trainers lacked sufficient knowledge on the subject matter they were teaching. This inadequacy in expertise, he/she felt, hindered the overall effectiveness of the training program. The volunteer recommended that the curriculum be regularly updated and that trainers receive more comprehensive education on the topics to ensure that they are well-equipped to deliver accurate and relevant information.

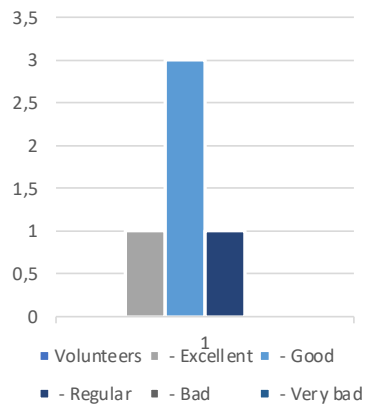
Volunteers Survey

1. How would you rate the communication and information provided before the event?



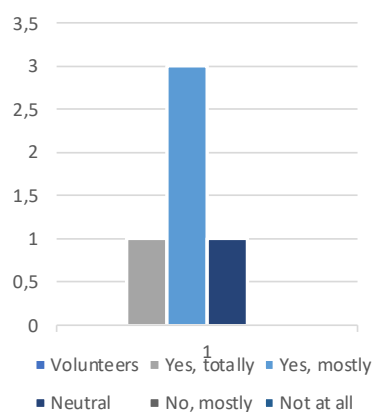
Most participants rated the communication and information provided prior to the events as “excellent”, with one participant rating it as “good” and another as “regular”. This suggested that even though the majority felt well informed there might be place to improve in the clarity of the pre event communication.

2. How would you evaluate the organization and logistics of the training?



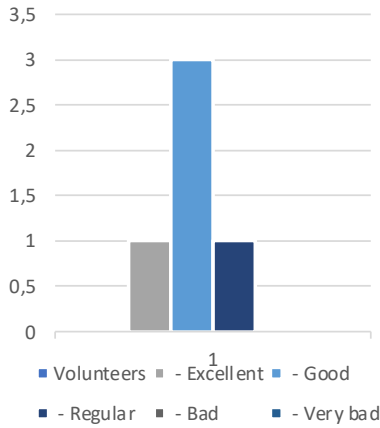
Regarding the organization and logistics of the training event, three out of the five participants rated as “excellent”, while one said it was “good” and another as “regular”. Indicating that the overall organization was well received, there were some aspects that can be enhanced to ensure a consistently smooth training.

3. Was the time and duration of the event appropriate?



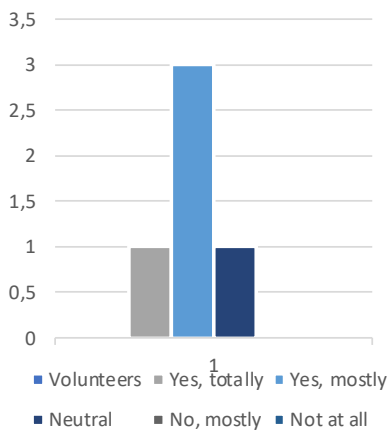
Most of the participants felt that the time and duration of the event were appropriate, with one indicating that it was “mostly” appropriate and another remaining “neutral”. These results suggested that, in general, the event schedule met volunteers' expectations, although some may have experienced minor concerns regarding the timing.

4. How would you rate the training and support received during your volunteer work?



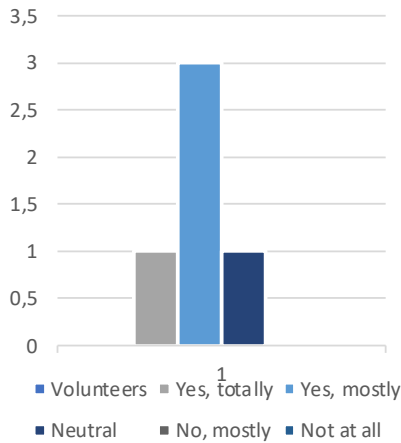
The training and support received were rated as “excellent” by most participants, one rated as “good” and another as “regular”. Showing that there may be opportunities to address the needs of those who felt it was less comprehensive.

5. Were the resources and materials provided adequate to carry out your work as a volunteer?



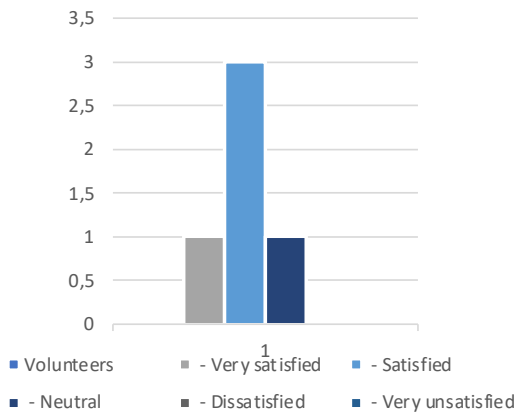
Most participants agreed that the resources and materials provided were adequate to carry out the work as a volunteer, one felt is was “mostly” adequate, while another one was “neutral”. This feedback suggested that there is room to update or improve them for greater consistency and effectiveness.

6. Did you feel safe and supported during your volunteering?



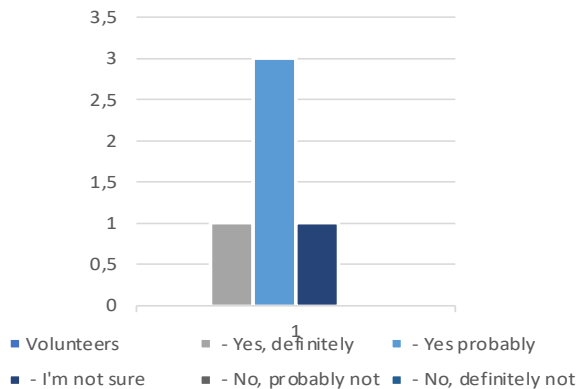
In terms of safety and supported the majority of volunteers reported they did felt safe and supported, one felt “mostly” supported, and anotherone was neutral. This indicates a positive overall environment, though there may be isolated areas where safety and support could be reinforced.

7. How would you rate your overall satisfaction with the organization of the volunteer event?



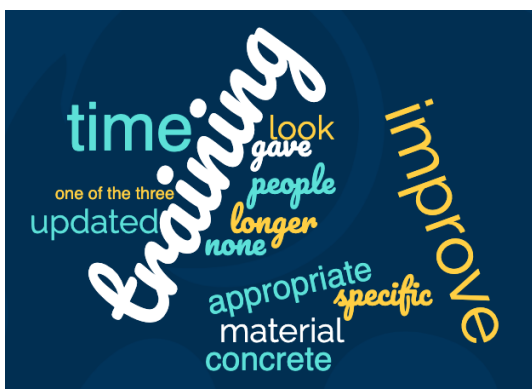
Overall satisfaction according to most participants was “very satisfying”, one participant found it “satisfying” and another one neutral. This demonstrates that some improvements could be made to enhance the overall satisfaction.

8. Would you recommend this type of volunteering events to other people?



When asked whether they would recommend this type of volunteering events to others, three out of the five participants responded “definitely”, one said “probably”, and one said uncertain. Showing most were satisfied with the experience, although some may have had reservations.

9. What aspects of the event organization do you think could be improved?



Participants found several areas of improvement, with the most frequently mentioned aspects being the training process, event timing and the need for updated material. These suggestions point potential improvements to enhance the volunteer experience.

10. What did you like most about your experience in this volunteering event?



The aspects volunteers enjoyed most about their experience were their interactions with students, the opportunity to experience Ecuador and the friendship they formed during the event. These elements highlight the personal and cultural value of the volunteering experience, in addition to the work itself.

11. Do you have any additional suggestions or comments?

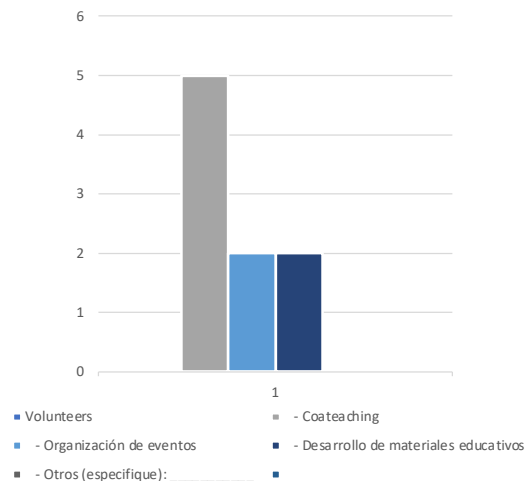


Regarding additional suggestions or comments some volunteers mention the desire for longer services and improvement on the organization.

The feedback from volunteers was mixed but provided critical insights regarding program organization and execution. While all five volunteers acknowledged that there was room for organizational improvement, they highlighted the positive aspects of their experience. Volunteers appreciated the opportunity to meet and collaborate with teachers and students. They emphasized the welcoming atmosphere created by the teachers, even those with extensive experience, who were open to inviting volunteers into their classrooms. This approach not only facilitated effective collaboration but also contributed to a supportive learning environment. Finally, a volunteer expressed dissatisfaction, stating that he/she believed the training provided was outdated.

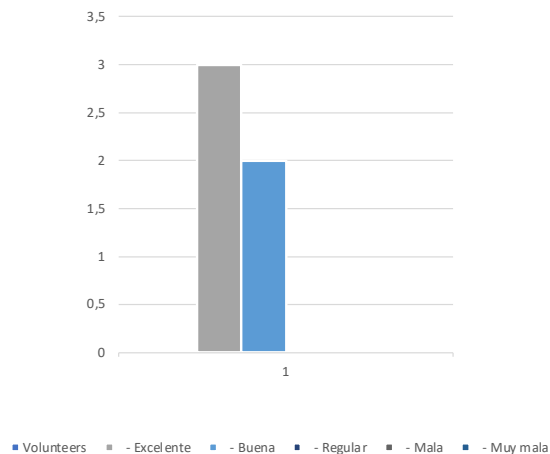
Teachers Survey

1. What type of activity did you work on with the volunteer?



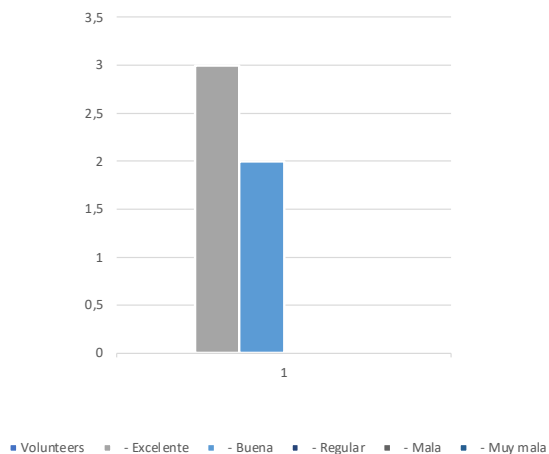
Teachers engaged in a variety of activities with volunteers, including coaching students, organizing materials, and coordinating events. These activities were designed to support the overall teaching process and to provide additional resources for classroom management and student learning.

2. How would you rate the volunteer's punctuality and responsibility?



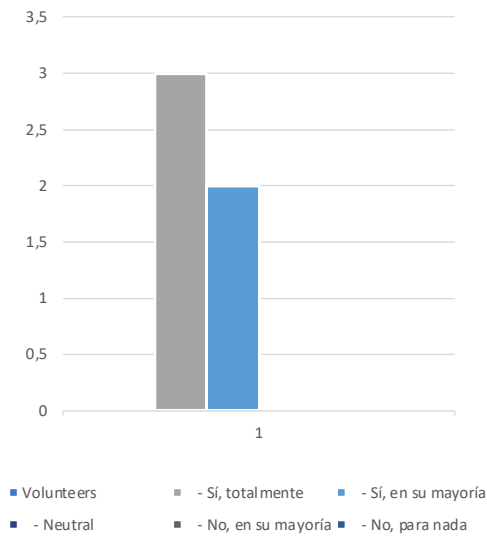
Regarding the volunteer's punctuality and sense of responsibility three out of the five participants rated these qualities as "excellent" while two rated them as good. This suggested that the majority of volunteers were reliable and timely in fulfilling their assigned duties.

3. How would you evaluate the volunteer's attitude and disposition?



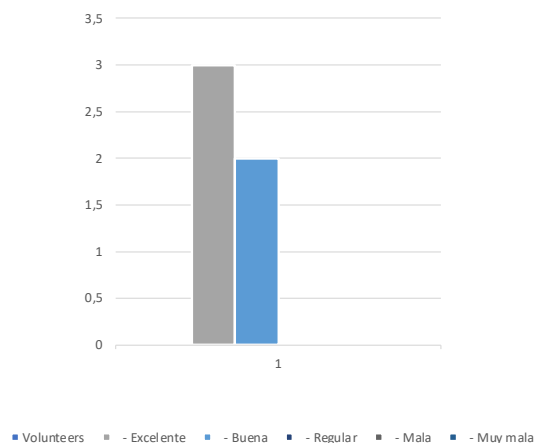
The volunteers were highly regarded for their attitude and disposition. Three participants rated these attributes as "excellent" while two indicated that they were good. Reflecting a generally positive and cooperative demeanor from the volunteers.

4. Did the volunteer demonstrate adequate skills for co-teaching activities?



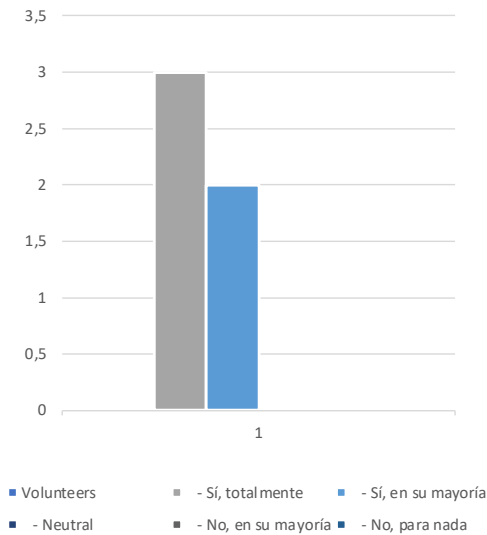
Volunteers demonstrated adequate skills for co-teaching according to most of the participants. Three out of the five teachers indicated that volunteers “fully” exhibited the required skills, while two mentioned that they demonstrated these skills “for the majority of the time” this indicated that there may be room for consistency improvements.

5. How would you rate the communication and interpersonal relationship with the volunteer?



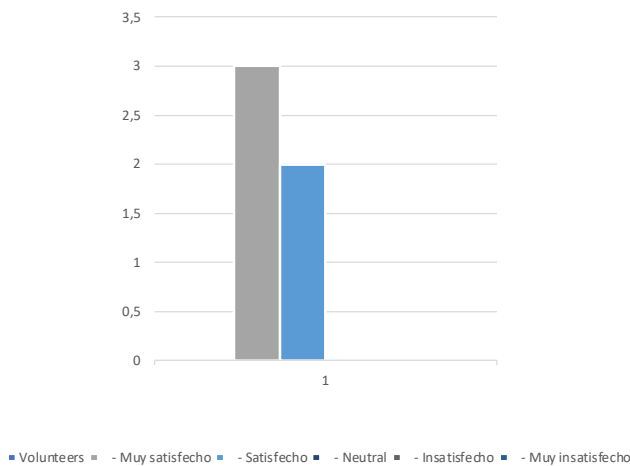
Communication and interpersonal relationship between teachers and volunteers were generally viewed as favorably. Three teachers rated this aspects as “excellent” and two as “good” which appear to have been key contributors to successful collaboration.

6. Do you think the volunteer's participation had a positive impact during their time of support?



The impact of volunteer's participation was largely seen as positive. Three teachers said volunteers made a “significant” positive impact and two reported that the impact was “mostly positive” indicating volunteers played a beneficial role enhancing the educational experience.

7. How would you rate your overall satisfaction in working with the volunteer?



Overall satisfaction in working with the volunteer was high, with the three out of the five participants reporting that they were “very satisfied” and two indicating that they were “satisfied”. This highlights a generally successful experience in working with volunteers.

8. What aspects of working with volunteers do you think could be improved?



Teachers identified several areas for improvement in the volunteer program. The most frequently mentioned suggestions included extending the duration of volunteer support, enhancing the quality of interactions or contributions, and ensuring that volunteers are present for a longer period to maximize their effectiveness.

9. What did you like most about your experience working with the volunteer?



Teachers appreciated several aspects of working with the volunteers. They valued having additional support in the classroom, including someone to practice with and someone who could provide extra help in daily tasks.

10. Do you have any additional suggestions or comments about the volunteer program or the volunteer?

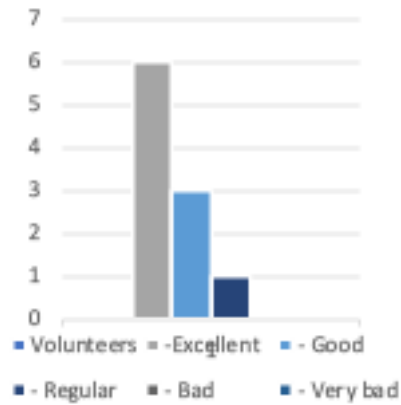


Suggestions from teachers focused on extending the volunteer services and integrating volunteers more deeply into the program.

Most teachers interviewed expressed a positive review regarding their involvement in the volunteer program. Notably, all five teachers indicated that they learned from the experience and expressed a desire to participate again in the future. The collaborative nature of the program fostered an environment of shared learning, allowing teachers to integrate new perspectives and methodologies into their teaching practices.

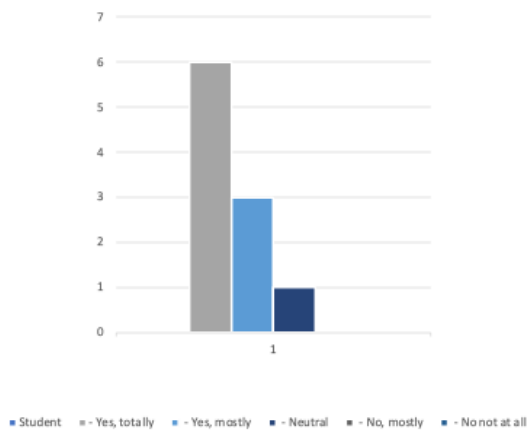
Students Survey

1. How would you rate your overall experience with the classroom volunteers?



In assessing the overall experience with classroom volunteers, six out of ten students rated their experience as "excellent," indicating a high level of satisfaction with the support provided. Three students rated their experience as "good," reflecting a generally positive, though slightly less enthusiastic, perception. One student rated the experience as "regular," suggesting a neutral or average experience.

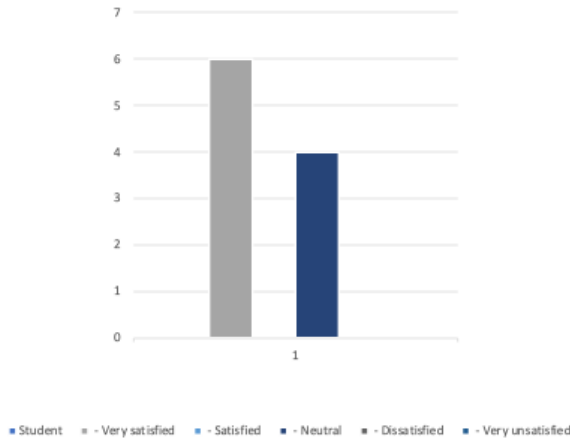
2. Do you feel that the support provided by the volunteers complemented what you learned from your teacher?



When asked whether the volunteers' support complemented the instruction provided by their teachers, six students reported that the support "totally" complemented their learning, while three students responded that it "mostly". However, one student expressed "neutral", stating that he/she neither agreed nor disagreed. This neutrality could suggest

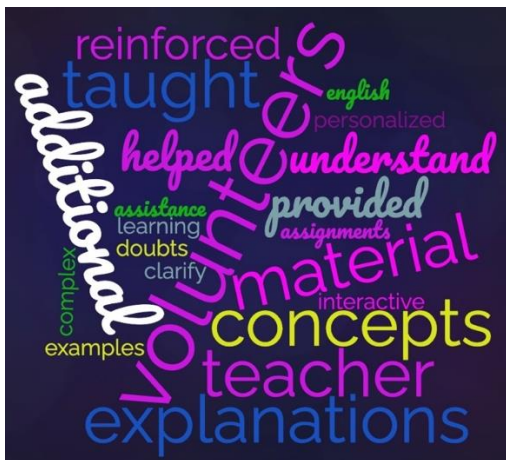
that, for this student, the volunteer's role was not as clearly integrated into their learning process.

3. How would you rate your overall satisfaction with the program of volunteer support?



Regarding overall satisfaction with the volunteer support program, six students indicated that they were "very satisfied," while three students stated they were "satisfied." These responses reflect a generally high level of approval, with no students expressing dissatisfaction. One student remained neutral, neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the statement.

4. How did the volunteers affect your learning experience? (e.g., did they help explain concepts, provide assistance with assignments, etc.)



The volunteer's role in enhancing the students' learning experiences helped them not only with the creation of materials which was something students pointed out but also with

further reinforcement with the language. Many students reported that volunteers were instrumental in explaining complex concepts, particularly those that were challenging to grasp during regular classroom instruction. Additionally, the volunteers provided individualized assistance with assignments, which helped to reinforce learning and boost students' confidence.

5. Would you like to see volunteers in your classroom again? Why or why not?

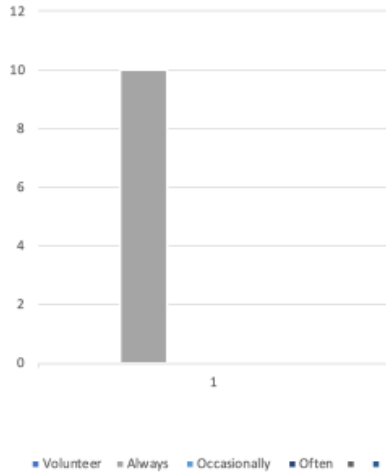


The majority of students expressed a desire to see volunteers return to their classrooms in the future. They appreciated the extra support and individualized attention, which they felt enhanced their learning experience. However, a few students felt that, while the volunteers were helpful, their presence was not essential to their learning process. These mixed responses suggest that while most students see clear benefits, the perceived necessity of volunteers may vary depending on individual learning preferences and needs.

To conclude students expressed enthusiasm about their interactions with the volunteers. The ten student participants reported a high level of satisfaction, emphasizing that they felt they learned significantly during the program. Most notably, students enjoyed the opportunity to practice their English skills with native speakers, which they found to be both educational and enjoyable. This interaction contributed to enhancing their confidence and communicative competence in the language.

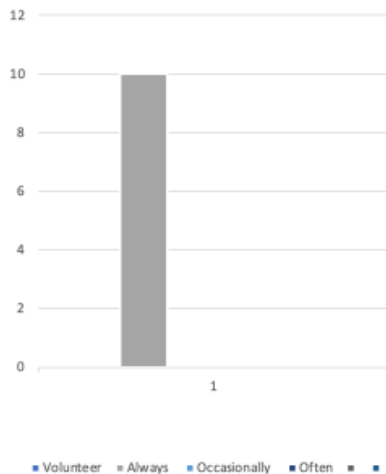
Volunteer Observation Worksheet

1. Was the volunteer punctual in attending the class?



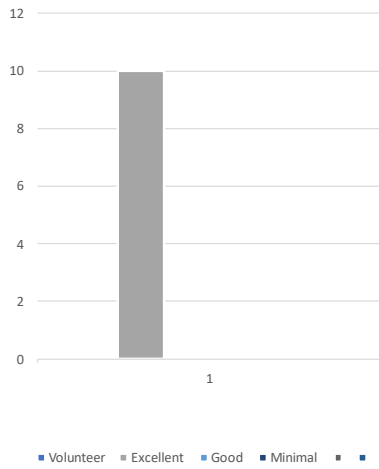
Volunteers according to teachers "always" demonstrated punctuality, attending each session on time. This was beneficial for students since they received the full benefit of the planned support.

2. Was the volunteer well-prepared with the materials and activities needed for the class?



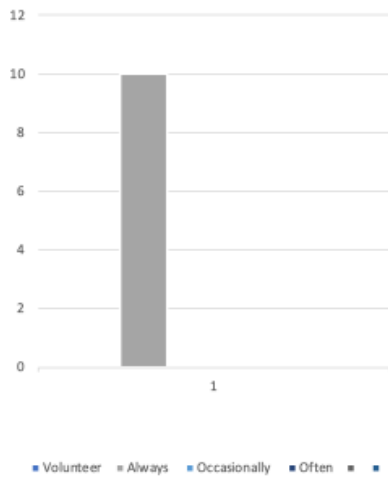
Teachers mentioned volunteers were "always" well prepared arriving with all necessary materials and activities for each session.

3. How effectively did the volunteer engage with the students?



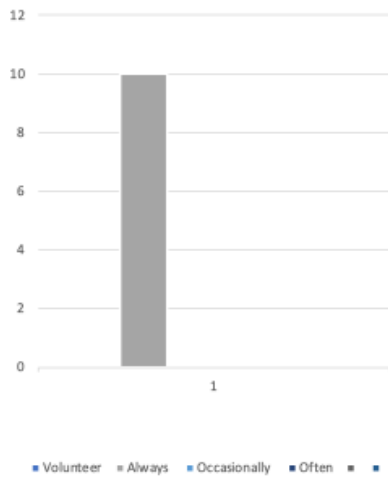
The volunteer’s engagement with students was rated as “excellent” fostering positive relationships and being able to capture students’ attention.

4. Did the volunteer provide clear and understandable explanations?



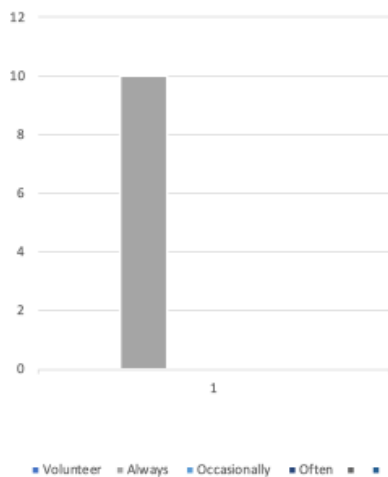
Volunteers “always” provided clear and comprehensible explanations during their interactions with students, reducing the likelihood of confusion, thereby improving learning outcomes.

5. Did the volunteer communicate effectively with the teacher?



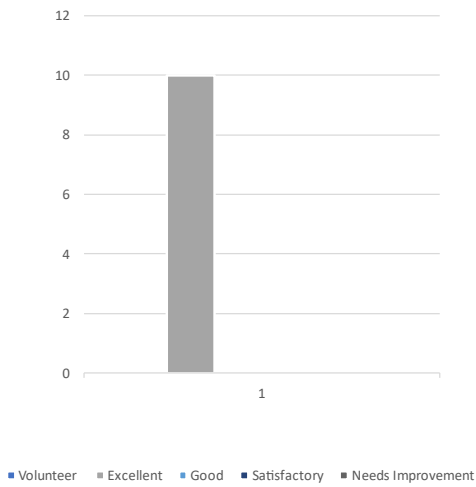
Volunteers “always” maintained strong communication with the teachers, ensuring that both parties were aligned in their objectives and classroom management strategies.

6. Did the volunteer support the teacher in managing the classroom?



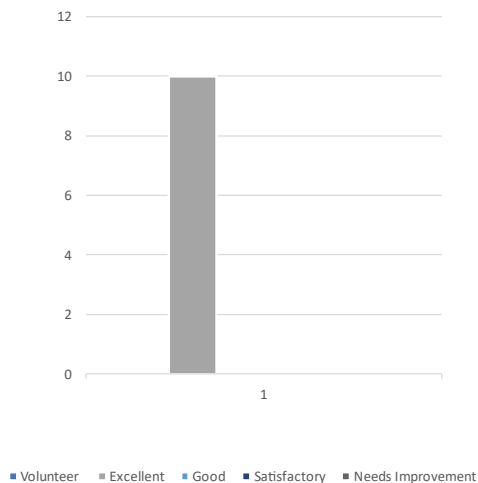
Volunteers “always” provided support in managing the classroom. This contributed to a well-organized learning environment.

7. How would you rate the volunteer's attitude towards the students, teachers, and tasks?



The volunteer's attitude was rated as "excellent" demonstrating a positive, respectful and professional interaction.

8. How would you rate the volunteer's overall contribution to the class?



The overall contribution of volunteers was rated as "excellent" this demonstrated that volunteers not only contributed to student learning process, but also to classroom management and teacher support.

The observation survey conducted on volunteers assisting English teachers revealed that their work was good. The results underscore the importance of integrating volunteers into educational settings, particularly in language teaching, where their contributions could significantly enhance the learning experience. Volunteers consistently demonstrated punctuality and were well-prepared for their tasks. Volunteers engaged effectively with students, often taking the initiative to explain concepts and provide additional support. Their collaboration with teachers was marked by excellent communication and teamwork, contributing to a well-managed and organized classroom environment. Moreover, the volunteers exhibited strong problem-solving skills and adaptability, handling challenges with minimal guidance. Their professionalism and positive attitude were noted by both teachers and students, creating a conducive and supportive learning environment.

CONCLUSION

This article focused on the observation of volunteers who assisted English teachers in a classroom setting, aiming to assess their performance and contributions. Also presented the findings from surveys that provided valuable insights into the experiences of teachers, volunteers, and students involved in the program.

Volunteering in education has become a component in enhancing the quality of education, particularly in language teaching. Volunteers' role supporting teachers, engaging students, and contributing to classroom management has shown a positive impact in classroom settings.

The results indicated that the volunteers provided significant support, demonstrated professionalism, and positively influenced the learning environment. Teachers felt that they benefited from their collaboration with volunteers, while volunteers appreciated the welcoming nature of the teachers and the positive interactions with students, some of the benefits were to reduce the workload for teacher, as volunteers helped them in grading, bringing extra activities and working directly with students, allowing teachers to focus on education and professional development. Volunteers often brought new ideas and teaching methods that enriched pedagogical practices in the classroom and helped students concentrate and practice more. Finally, the third component, students, reported significant learning outcomes and a desire for continued interaction with volunteers.

As an important outcome, and despite the gratitude expressed regarding the program, volunteers indicated a need for improved organizational structure, and while the program achieved significant impacts, not only the challenge mention by volunteers impeded its full potential, but some others mentioned throughout the article. The limited program duration of six months constrained the ability to accomplish all planned activities. This time constraint, coupled with the volunteers' lack of experience in managing large classrooms, posed significant hurdles to the program's effectiveness. Additionally, the small sample size of host organization volunteers and teachers further limited the generalizability of the findings. Despite these challenges, the research provided valuable insights into the need for more extensive training and longer engagement periods to maximize the benefits of volunteer-led educational initiatives.

Ultimately, the study suggested that while the program is successful, addressing organizational challenges could further enhance its effectiveness and impact on all participants.

The findings align with existing literature that highlights the benefits of volunteer involvement in education. The volunteers not only supported the teachers but also enhanced the overall learning experience for students. Their ability to engage with students and assist in classroom management was particularly noted as a significant factor in the positive outcomes observed.

Teachers reported that the volunteers' contributions allowed them to focus more on instruction and less on administrative tasks, leading to a more effective teaching process. The volunteers' presence also provided students with additional support, helping to bridge gaps in understanding and encouraging active participation.

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ANEXES

APENDIX A

Volunteer Survey

1. How would you rate the communication and information provided before the event?

- Excellent
- Good
- Regular
- Bad
- Very bad

2. How would you evaluate the organization and logistics of the training?

- Excellent
- Good
- Regular
- Bad
- Very bad

3. Was the time and duration of the event appropriate?

- Yes, totally
- Yes, mostly
- Neutral
- No, mostly
- No not at all

4. How would you rate the training and support received during your volunteer work?

- Excellent
- Good
- Regular
- Bad
- Very bad

5. Were the resources and materials provided adequate to carry out your work as a volunteer?

- Yes, totally
- Yes, mostly
- Neutral
- No, mostly
- No not at all

6. Did you feel safe and supported during your volunteering?

- Yes, totally
- Yes, mostly
- Neutral
- No, mostly
- No not at all

7. How would you rate your overall satisfaction with the organization of the volunteer event?

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neutral
- Dissatisfied
- Very unsatisfied

8. Would you recommend this type of volunteering events to other people?

- Yes, definitely
- Yes probably
- I'm not sure
- No, probably not
- No, definitely not

9. What aspects of the event organization do you think could be improved?

10. What did you like most about your experience in this volunteering event?

11. Do you have any additional suggestions or comments?

APENDIX B

Encuesta de Satisfacción

Participación Voluntaria

1. ¿En qué tipo de actividad trabajaste con el voluntario/a?
 - Coateaching
 - Organización de eventos
 - Desarrollo de materiales educativos
 - Otros (especifique): _____

2. ¿Cómo calificarías la puntualidad y responsabilidad del/la voluntario/a?
 - Excelente
 - Buena
 - Regular
 - Mala
 - Muy mala

3. ¿Cómo evaluarías la actitud y disposición del/la voluntario/a?
 - Excelente
 - Buena
 - Regular
 - Mala
 - Muy mala

4. ¿El/la voluntario/a mostró habilidades adecuadas para las actividades de coteaching?
 - Sí, totalmente
 - Sí, en su mayoría
 - Neutral
 - No, en su mayoría
 - No, para nada

5. ¿Cómo calificarías la comunicación y la relación interpersonal con el/la voluntario/a?
 - Excelente
 - Buena
 - Regular
 - Mala
 - Muy mala

6. ¿Crees que la participación del/la voluntario/a tuvo un impacto positivo durante su tiempo de apoyo?
 - Sí, definitivamente

- Sí, en su mayoría
- No estoy seguro/a
- No, en su mayoría
- No, para nada

7. ¿Cómo calificarías tu satisfacción general al trabajar con el/la voluntario/a?

- Muy satisfecho
- Satisfecho
- Neutral
- Insatisfecho
- Muy insatisfecho

8. ¿Qué aspectos del trabajo con el voluntario consideras que podrían mejorarse?

9. ¿Qué te ha gustado más de tu experiencia al trabajar con el voluntario?

10. ¿Tienes alguna sugerencia o comentario adicional sobre el programa de voluntariado o sobre el voluntario?

APENDIX C

Students Survey

1. How would you rate your overall experience with the classroom volunteers?

- Excellent
- Good
- Regular
- Bad
- Very bad

2. Do you feel that the support provided by the volunteers complemented what you learned from your teacher?

- Yes, totally
- Yes, mostly
- Neutral
- No, mostly
- No not at all

3. How would you rate your overall satisfaction with the program of volunteer support?

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neutral
- Dissatisfied
- Very unsatisfied

4. How did the volunteers affect your learning experience? (e.g., did they help explain concepts, provide assistance with assignments, etc.)

5. Would you like to see volunteers in your classroom again? Why or why not?

APENDIX D

Volunteer Observation Survey

Class:

Date:

Observer:

Volunteer Name:

Teacher Assisted:

7. Was the volunteer punctual in attending the class?

- Always
- Occasionally
- Often

8. Was the volunteer well-prepared with the materials and activities needed for the class?

- Always
- Occasionally
- Often

9. How effectively did the volunteer engage with the students?

- Excellent
- Good
- Minimal

10. Did the volunteer provide clear and understandable explanations?

- Always
- Occasionally

Often

11. Did the volunteer communicate effectively with the teacher?

- Always
- Occasionally
- Often

12. Did the volunteer support the teacher in managing the classroom?

- Always
- Occasionally
- Often

7. How would you rate the volunteer's attitude towards the students, teachers, and tasks?

- Excellent
- Good
- Satisfactory
- Needs Improvement

8. How would you rate the volunteer's overall contribution to the class?

- Excellent
- Good
- Satisfactory
- Needs Improvement