

## Chapter 5

### Results

While the previous chapter was centered on the emerging story seen through the eyes of the researcher, the present chapter shifts the weight of the researcher role from participant to analyzer and interpreter of data. Consequently, Chapter Five presents the research findings according to the processes of analysis previously described in Chapter Three. The presentation of findings is organized in relation to the two original research questions, along with salient additional findings. Alternatively, see Appendix I for the results of the research questions organized by data collection instrument.

#### 5.1 Results of Research Question One

The first research question posed this question: What are the needs of short-term international volunteers relevant to facilitating English language learning in the local context? The presentation of the results of the first research question is organized under three broad themes: fulfillment of the volunteers' general living needs; pursuit of sound classroom practice; and respect of the local context.

##### 5.1.1 Fulfillment of the Volunteers' General Living Needs

In this section, the general living needs of the volunteers are described in greater detail. They have been divided into three sub-categories: physical needs, preparatory tasks and logistical needs, and actualization needs.

###### 5.1.1.1 Physical Needs

Among the volunteers' basic physical needs is the need for sufficient rest and adequate food supply. In the pre-arrival questionnaire distributed to the volunteers, Dianne, one of the volunteer lead teachers, responded that being tired and having an uncomfortable bed were the most challenging foreseeable aspects of the volunteer engagement. On the day of the group's arrival to Chiang Rai, it was apparent that the long hours in flight and approximately 12-hour time difference had affected the restfulness of the volunteers. During a late-afternoon lull in activity on their arrival day, nearly all of the volunteers fell asleep at group coordinator Mark's house. Mark, who noticed the tired state of the volunteers, indicated that it would be preferable for volunteers to have their initial arrival day to rest and recover from their travels rather than planning to orient tired volunteers on that same day.

During the volunteer group's week of service, access to food was typically not a concern. Breakfast was laid out in the morning at the resort, and village church members prepared daily lunch meals for the volunteers. For dinner, there were several restaurants nearby the resort that were accessible to the volunteers. More often, the pressing need was to understand what food options were available at a

given place. In general, these restaurants had a menu only in Thai, so interpretation of the menu was needed in order for the volunteers to know their dining options. The volunteers, who had already paid approximately \$2,500 per person to join this volunteer project, also desired economical food options. At one evening dinner when the cost of the meal per person more than doubled the price of previous meals, a few of the volunteers complained about the relatively high cost of the meal.

#### 5.1.1.2 Preparatory Tasks and Logistical Needs

Prior to their arrival to Thailand, the volunteers attended to various preparatory tasks, including organizing travel documents and packing supplies for personal and volunteer team use. Group leader Donna informed the volunteers of specific requirements and offered her availability to the volunteers whenever they wanted to get in touch with her with questions about the trip. There was also an expectation that the volunteers would carry out the preparatory responsibilities given to them. In her reflection journal, Donna recalled the frustration of unfinished tasks by one volunteer, and the ensuing burden of additional work it placed on her:

*I had a talk with [Dianne] before we left the U.S... I shared with her that one volunteer didn't have an assignment I'd given completed, and that I'd have to pick up the slack. Why did that volunteer sign on for this if the assignment hasn't been done? Not completing the work doesn't help the ministry and I don't want that kind of volunteer. (Donna's reflection journal, Wednesday)*

During the group's time in Thailand, the schedule and logistical preparations made by group organizers served as a framework for the volunteer group. The process of creating, communicating, and carrying out the plans enabled the group to accomplish numerous daily undertakings – from traveling, to assembling for group meetings, to eating together. There were instances in which some logistical details had been overlooked in planning, such as providing sufficient space in the transportation of the volunteers along with their baggage and team resources. There were also instances when details of scheduling were not communicated to the volunteer group. In her post-experience questionnaire, volunteer Pat highlighted the need for clear and well-communicated plans in response to the following question:

Do you feel you had any needs throughout your time of volunteer service that could have been addressed more fully? If so, what were they, and how could they have been more fully addressed?

*Some of the directions given to me ahead of time weren't what happened. (I can be flexible without getting upset.) Time to get a thorough, updated plan with the entire team; time to ask questions with all the team members before the week's work began. (Pat's post-experience questionnaire)*

In summary, the preparatory and scheduling needs were like a two-way street. On one side, the volunteers needed to comply with the plan that was established for the group, and also be flexible as that plan was modified. On the other side, there was a need for consistent and clear communication so that the volunteers could satisfy organizational and personal expectations.

### 5.1.1.3 Actualization Needs

The volunteer participants each came with varied motivations they sought to fulfill on the trip. For Rachel, a recent university graduate in search of full-time employment, her trip motivations were closely linked to her upcoming responsibilities in the English language classroom. She reported the following in her pre-arrival questionnaire:

*I have been considering applying for a year-long program teaching English in another country... I have been hesitant to commit to such a program since I don't have any ESL teaching experience and have never been to Asia. This two-week trip seemed like the perfect opportunity to get a taste for ESL teaching without it being a long-term commitment, plus it will be my first experience traveling to and living in Asia. I'm hoping to be able to use this experience to try out ESL teaching abroad. (Rachel's pre-arrival questionnaire)*

Rachel was the only volunteer who reported a motive for participation related to interest in language teaching as a future job. For other volunteers, their reported motivations were broader than, or tangential to, the English classroom. In the pre-arrival questionnaires, nearly all of the volunteers reported a desire to help and serve people in need. Furthermore, Dianne and Pat, both serving as volunteer lead teachers, both commented on their long-standing interest in doing faith-based service work as a primary motivating factor in joining the volunteer trip. Donna, the volunteer group leader, reported that a chief factor in organizing the volunteer trip was not only to make an impression on the lives of people in Thailand, but also to transform the lives of the volunteers. In her pre-arrival questionnaire, Donna wrote: "I receive great reward in the fact that this ministry is life-changing for the volunteer."

The process of learning about the new living context was identified by some of the volunteers as a deeply fulfilling aspect of the trip. In her reflection journal, volunteer Claire recounted a trip to town she made with ministry coordinator Mark as well as Missionary Sam and his wife Jit to pick up additional health care supplies. This additional time spent with individuals with insider knowledge was rewarding and helped instill within her a stronger connection to her new surroundings: "What an experience to learn so much about the country and culture! I know I am falling in love with Thailand."

At the end of their week of English teaching in the school, the volunteers reported in the post-experience questionnaire which aspects of their experience they had found especially rewarding. Each of the four volunteer lead teachers included information relevant to their experience in the language classroom. Dianne reported on the specific classroom activities which she found the most rewarding. Both Rachel and Carl noted the development they saw in their students, in terms of comprehension as well as increased class participation. Pat reported that her greatest reward was "opening a door to the Gospel to children in these classes." This closely reflected her reported pre-arrival motivation of "bringing God's word to people who may never have heard about the God who loves them."

### 5.1.2 Pursuit of Sound Classroom Practice

This next section addresses the volunteers' needs which are more specific to their experience of English language teaching. This section is divided into five

subcategories: the need for a basic schemata of the local language classroom; the need for comprehensible English teaching to match students' level of comprehension; the need for classroom management techniques; the need for effective use of effective resources; and the need for a clear framework for English programming.

#### 5.1.2.1 Need for a Basic Schemata of the Language Classroom

Data from the pre-arrival questionnaire offered insights into the volunteer lead teachers' previous experiences in the language classroom. The data further identified the volunteers' concerns prior to the start of their responsibilities as lead teachers in an English language classroom. Their responses, summarized below, indicate that the four volunteer lead teachers came from distinct life experiences, and they had differing concerns about their forthcoming English teaching.

*Pat:* Of the four volunteer lead teachers, Pat had the most experience in the classroom setting. Recently retired, she had worked as a school teacher for twenty years in various private schools, with experience teaching at the preschool, primary school, and high school level. Pat had taken coursework at both the undergraduate and graduate level in the field of education. In her current hometown area, she assists a Hmong pastor in developing his English spoken communication skills. Pat's own formal language learning includes her high school study of Latin and German.

Pat commented on some particular areas of concern for her upcoming teaching responsibilities. She identified the following concern: "Knowing the motivation the students are there: no other classes being held? Really want to learn English? Attending because they can't go home?" Another concern was the uncertainty of what classroom resources would be available to her. She also noted a concern about the teaching plan (see Appendix J): "We have been presented with a curriculum for the week. My concerns are whether or not the students have enough English background to understand the presentation of this curriculum." Finally, she reported that "working with an interpreter in the time frames I have been given" and "not having sufficient time and language to know that the lessons are learned" were the areas she expected to be the most challenging aspects of her volunteer engagement.

*Dianne:* In the pre-arrival questionnaire, Dianne did not report having any prior experience with language teaching or learning. She did, however, include among her teaching experiences 15 years of homeschooling her children, as well as numerous years of teaching in other non-traditional settings. Dianne further noted that she considered her experiences as a summer camp counselor to be relevant to her preparation as a volunteer English language teacher.

*Carl:* In the pre-arrival questionnaire, Carl reported no prior teaching or learning experiences in the language classroom. Among his relevant background experiences, he included homework help and Bible instruction for his children. His responses on the Likert-scale portion of the questionnaire indicated that he had varying levels of concern for some aspects of the upcoming teaching project, although he did not provide detailed comments about any particular concerns.

*Rachel:* Though the youngest among the volunteer lead teachers, Rachel reported the most relevant language learning and teaching experiences relative to the three other volunteer lead teachers. She had studied French from sixth grade through

university, graduating with French as one of her majors (the other being International Studies). Rachel reported also having studied multiple semesters of Italian, which she also taught twice weekly in an informal after-school program over a three-month period. Other reported experiences included teaching children's Bible programs at church and tutoring various subjects in the public school. She noted that "although I have never done ESL teaching, I feel that these other teaching experiences will be useful in this volunteer opportunity abroad."

Rachel commented on several concerns she had for the upcoming volunteer teaching experience. In particular, she noted the concerns of potentially having to manage a large class of students, as well as knowing how to prepare lessons. Another concern was where to turn for support: "There is a lot I don't know about the classroom and effective teaching styles, and I don't know what to do in advance to prepare for this."

The pre-arrival questionnaire also included a Likert-scale series of statements listing concerns that the volunteers potentially faced prior to their English teaching experience. For each statement, respondents could select from the following choices: *major concern*, *concern*, *minor concern*, or *not a concern*; they could also indicate if a statement was *not applicable* and then write a follow-up comment as to why the statement did not apply to their situation. The original pre-arrival questionnaire is included in Appendix B, while individual volunteer responses can be found in Appendix K. Below, Table 1 presents the collective quantitative results of the questionnaire among the four volunteer lead English teachers, organized by categorical group:

**Table 1 Pre-Arrival Volunteer Questionnaire - Results from Volunteer Lead Teachers Categories Ranked in Descending Order of Mean**

Category	Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	S.D.	Interpretation
Local Context	1.56	0.85	Concern
Aspects of Teaching and Learning English	1.41	0.61	Minor Concern
Learners	1.00	0.87	Minor Concern
Delivery of Lessons	0.90	0.85	Minor Concern
Teaching and Learning Resources	0.80	1.01	Minor Concern

Interpretive key:

0.00 - 0.75	= Not a Concern
0.76 - 1.50	= Minor Concern
1.51 - 2.25	= Concern
2.26 - 3.00	= Major Concern

According to the results listed in Table 1, the *Local Context* was interpreted as a "concern" among the volunteer lead teachers ( $\bar{x} = 1.56$ ) and was the highest category of concern relative to the other categories. The remaining four categories were all interpreted by the volunteer lead teachers as "minor concerns": *Aspects of Teaching and Learning English* ( $\bar{x} = 1.41$ ); *Learners* ( $\bar{x} = 1.00$ ); *Delivery of Lessons* ( $\bar{x} = 0.90$ ); and *Teaching and Learning Resources* ( $\bar{x} = 0.80$ ). Thus, none of the categories posed as a "major concern" or "not a concern" to the volunteer lead teacher group. The following tables provide further detail into the volunteer lead teachers' responses to statements within each category.

**Table 2 Pre-Arrival Volunteer Questionnaire - Local Context Statements Ranked in Descending Order of Mean**

Statement	Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	S.D.	Interpretation
21. I am unsure how to create lessons that effectively address my students' language needs and goals.	2.67	0.58	Major Concern
22. I am unsure of the teaching style most appropriate for my students.	1.75	0.96	Concern
20. I am unsure what my students' language needs are.	1.75	0.96	Concern
19. I am unsure what my students' language goals are.	1.50	0.58	Minor Concern
23. I am unsure of the expectations of the local school administration.	1.25	0.96	Minor Concern
18. I am unsure what I should teach my students.	1.25	0.50	Minor Concern
24. I am unsure how my English teaching will fit with the local English curriculum.	1.00	0.82	Minor Concern

As seen in Table 2, one of the Likert-scale statements within the *Local Context* category was interpreted as a "major concern" for the volunteer lead teacher group: "I am unsure how to create lessons that effectively address my students' language needs and goals" ( $\bar{x} = 2.67$ ). Two statements in the *Local Context* category posed as "concerns." The first is Statement 22: "I am unsure of the teaching style most appropriate for my students" ( $\bar{x} = 1.75$ ). The other is Statement 20: "I am unsure what my students' language needs are" ( $\bar{x} = 1.75$ ). The four remaining statements in the *Local Context* category were interpreted as "minor concerns."

**Table 3 Pre-Arrival Volunteer Questionnaire - Aspects of Teaching and Learning English Statements Ranked in Descending Order of Mean**

Statement	Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	S.D.	Interpretation
32. I am unsure how to help my students become better language learners.	1.75	0.96	Concern
28. I am unsure how to develop writing skills among my students.	1.50	0.58	Minor Concern
27. I am unsure how to develop reading skills among my students.	1.50	0.58	Minor Concern
26. I am unsure how to develop listening skills among my students.	1.50	0.58	Minor Concern
25. I am unsure how to develop speaking skills among my students.	1.50	0.58	Minor Concern
30. I am unsure how to develop my students' vocabulary base.	1.25	0.50	Minor Concern
29. I am unsure how to develop my students' understanding of grammar.	1.25	0.50	Minor Concern
31. I am unsure how to develop my students' pronunciation.	1.00	0.82	Minor Concern

In the category of *Aspects of Teaching and Learning English*, Statement 32 was interpreted as a "concern": "I am unsure how to help my students become better language learners" ( $\bar{x} = 1.75$ ). The other eight statements in the category, each relating to a particular language skill or feature of the language system, were all interpreted as "minor concerns."

**Table 4 Pre-Arrival Volunteer Questionnaire - Learners  
Statements Ranked in Descending Order of Mean**

Statement	Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	S.D.	Interpretation
12. My students won't understand what I'm saying.	1.50	1.00	Minor Concern
13. My students will speak a language other than English in the classroom.	1.33	0.58	Minor Concern
17. The size of the class will be difficult to manage effectively.	1.25	1.50	Minor Concern
11. My students won't participate in the activities I have planned.	1.25	0.96	Minor Concern
14. My students will lack motivation in learning English.	1.00	0.82	Minor Concern
10. My students won't maintain interest during class time.	0.67	0.58	Not a Concern
16. My students will misbehave in class.	0.50	0.58	Not a Concern
15. My students will have very different levels of English proficiency.	0.50	0.58	Not a Concern

As seen in Table 4, the statements in the *Learners* category of the pre-arrival questionnaire were all interpreted as either "minor concerns" or "not a concern" for the volunteer lead teachers. The same is true of the *Delivery of Lessons* category, as shown in Table 5.

**Table 5 Pre-Arrival Volunteer Questionnaire - Delivery of Lessons  
Statements Ranked in Descending Order of Mean**

Statement	Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	S.D.	Interpretation
5. I feel that my lessons won't flow smoothly from activity to activity.	1.25	0.96	Minor Concern
2. I'll have difficulty managing time in class.	1.25	0.96	Minor Concern
3. I am unsure how I should respond to students' language errors in class.	1.00	0.82	Minor Concern
1. I'll have trouble following through with my lesson plan.	0.75	0.96	Not a Concern
4. I feel that I'll spend too much of the class period talking.	0.25	0.50	Not a Concern

The category of *Teaching and Learning Resources* was interpreted as the lowest level of concern relative to the other four categories on the pre-arrival questionnaire. Still, within the *Teaching and Learning Resources* category, Statement 7 was interpreted as a "major concern": "*I am unsure how to prepare effective teaching or learning resources*" ( $\bar{x} = 2.33$ ). As noted in Table 6, the remaining three statements in the category were interpreted as "not a concern."

**Table 6 Pre-Arrival Volunteer Questionnaire - Teaching and Learning Resources Statements Ranked in Descending Order of Mean**

Statement	Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	S.D.	Interpretation
7. I am unsure how to prepare effective teaching or learning resources.	2.33	0.58	Major Concern
6. There will be insufficient teaching or learning resources provided for me.	0.75	0.96	Not a Concern
9. I won't make effective use of the board.	0.25	0.50	Not a Concern
8. I am unsure how to make effective use of the resources in the classroom.	0.25	0.50	Not a Concern

In summary, five statements were interpreted as more than a minor concern ( $\bar{x} > 1.50$ ) to the volunteer lead teacher group prior to their arrival to Thailand. Two of these statements were interpreted as “major concerns.” Of highest concern was Statement 21: “*I am unsure how to create lessons that effectively address my students' language needs and goals*” ( $\bar{x} = 2.67$ ). Also a “major concern” was Statement 7: “*I am unsure how to prepare effective teaching or learning resources*” ( $\bar{x} = 2.33$ ). Three other statements were interpreted as “concerns.” Among these was Statement 32: “*I am unsure how to help my students become better language learners*” ( $\bar{x} = 1.75$ ). Another “concern” to the volunteer lead teachers was Statement 22: “*I am unsure of the teaching style most appropriate for my students*” ( $\bar{x} = 1.75$ ). Finally, Statement 20 was also interpreted as a “concern”: “*I am unsure what my students' language needs are*” ( $\bar{x} = 1.75$ ).

It is also interesting to consider the statements which were interpreted as “not a concern” for the volunteer lead teacher group. Eight of the 32 statements were interpreted as “not a concern”; of these, at least three statements later manifested as concerns that the volunteer teachers wrote about in their daily reflection journals. Compare the following statements, initially interpreted as “not a concern” for the volunteer lead teacher group, with the reflections later made by these volunteers:

Statement 8: *I am unsure how to make effective use of the resources in the classroom* ( $\bar{x} = 0.25$ ).

*My least favorite part was the conversations. This was the last activity and the kids were all tired and seemed dis-interested. I remembered to have Ton translate the sentences first so that was good! Then I had two students come up to say it but immediately lost the interest of the rest of the class. So I divided the class in two and had them read the two parts but it still didn't go well. The sentences are long and not easy phrases to memorize. I'm not sure how to make this more effective. (Rachel's reflection journal, Tuesday)*

Statement 10: *My students won't maintain interest during class time* ( $\bar{x} = 0.67$ ).

*Today did not seem very productive for me. I reviewed the nativity and the resurrection, which they just stared blankly at me. The whole day was that way. The children could not be motivated and did not want to speak English out loud. I gave them a ten-minute break, which they took and I let them play after their murals because they would be staring out the window. I think they were tired today. (Carl's reflection journal, Thursday)*



Statement 15: *My students will have very different levels of English proficiency ( $\bar{x}$  = 0.50).*

*Doing the erase-a-word drill with John 3:16 wasn't as successful as I had anticipated. There were a select few who were very sharp remembering English words, and they did well with leading the others through the verse... Many students did the commands well. Others knew a few. (Pat's reflection journal, Friday)*

*The learning levels were quite different between students and this caused some challenges. (Carl's post-experience questionnaire)*

Such discrepancies between the volunteers' pre-arrival perceptions and their in-service or post-experience reflections indicate that the volunteers may have initially lacked a schematic understanding of the language classroom. Another example makes it further evident that some volunteers may have initially lacked an understanding of how to proceed as teachers in the English language classroom. On the day of the volunteers' arrival, as the group was being oriented to their various responsibilities, Carl asked how to begin in the classroom – should they start with the alphabet? It appeared he did not yet have the schemata of what his role as a teacher in the English classroom might entail. Without an opportunity to observe a local class or practice teaching prior to their Monday teaching session, the volunteers had to rely on their largely uninformed schemata when they entered the classroom the first day.

### 5.1.2.2 Need for Comprehensible English Teaching to Match Students' Level of Comprehension

During orientation on the day of the volunteers' arrival, Pat asked the group leaders a pertinent question: "Do we have any sense of the students' English level?" Both Mark and Donna admitted that there was not a clear indication of the current English level of the students. However, it appeared suitable to speculate that in a small, remote village at a school with students for whom Thai is a second language, the students' proficiency in English would be "beginner" at best.

Evidence from classroom observations confirmed the accuracy of this speculation, and further indicated that at times the content or the approach of the volunteers' teaching was beyond the beginning level of the students. At such times, the volunteer teachers needed to find ways to adapt their teaching strategies. For example, during a "penmanship" activity on the first day of teaching, Rachel attempted to explain that she wanted the students to copy the passage from the board on to the blank sentence strip in front of each of them. After a few unsuccessful attempts trying to explain it orally, Rachel returned to the board, drawing lines on the board similar to those on the sentence strips. She then modeled the action of copying from the board to fit within the lines of the sentence strips. After a few rounds of modeling while students followed along at their desk, the students were able to understand the expectations of the activity and carry on at their own pace.

As they became more acclimatized to the classroom, the volunteer lead teachers displayed a growing awareness in recognizing when gaps existed between their English teaching and the comprehension level of their students. It was not always possible, however, for them to diagnose the cause of that gap or have a

solution for bridging the gap, as the following excerpts from the volunteers' reflection journals illustrate:

*Sometimes when I'm waiting for a response from the class & they are quiet I can't tell if they don't understand or if they're just shy. (Rachel's reflection journal, Monday)*

*We reviewed the "Birth of Jesus" and "Crucifixion and Resurrection." The children were listening well so I told some details I had not told before. Whether it was a communication problem between me and my interpreter or not, but I couldn't determine what they remembered from yesterday. I told Ving to ask the children a question about the lesson, but since there were no responses, I think it got "lost" in translation! (Pat's reflection journal, Thursday)*

The comments by Pat further allude to one of the most widely used strategies in bridging the classroom communication gap: use of interpreters in each classroom. The process of learning how to work strategically with classroom interpreters became one of the most frequent topics in the volunteers' reflection journals. After the first day of teaching, three of the four volunteer lead teachers wrote about the need to include more interpretation in the classroom. Below, Carl's reflection from his first day of class illustrates his perception of classroom interpretation needs:

*I introduced myself and the introduction took a minute because I did not think to use Sam at that moment... I know in the future I plan on using my translator more strategically. If I have him clarify the meanings of sentences better then the children will probably be more enthusiastic about saying the words and sentences. (Carl's reflection journal, Monday)*

As the week progressed, the volunteer teachers typically strived for more efficient interpretation to boost student comprehension. In their reflections, all four of the volunteer lead teachers described the benefits of building a stronger working relationship with their classroom interpreter, or, inversely, the ensuing challenges if there was a switch of interpreters on a given day. But Pat also wondered about the purposefulness of interpretation and the extent to which it was beneficial for the English classroom:

*I tried to remember to break sentences down for ease of interpreting. Ving was good in including my motions and emotions in his interpretations, which I appreciated. I wonder if it's necessary for him to translate every bit of instructions, or if the children could pick up meaning from my hand signals as I speak – more of a language immersion method. (Pat's reflection journal, Tuesday)*

This concern notwithstanding, the volunteers utilized their classroom interpreters as an integral bridge between their own English output and the students' comprehension. Comments by volunteers in their post-experience questionnaire further signify the dependency that they felt for classroom interpretation:

*The most helpful thing during class time was having an interpreter there the whole class. I felt like it was necessary for each teacher to have an*

*interpreter in the room with them or else the English teaching would not have been as smooth or as effective. (Rachel's post-experience questionnaire)*

*[The students] didn't understand me, but they understood the translators. (Pat's post-experience questionnaire)*

In some cases, the reliance on classroom interpretation may indicate that the learning content was well beyond the English comprehension ability of the students. It may also be a sign that the volunteers lacked effective strategies for building the learners' listening skills and capacity for comprehension in English.

### 5.1.2.3 Need for Classroom Management Techniques

Besides wrestling issues of classroom comprehension, the volunteer teachers showed that at times they struggled to find approaches to classroom management that maintained interest among the students and made efficient use of class time. One particularly challenging area for the volunteer teachers was striking a favorable balance in the classroom: striving to give individualized, diagnostic attention to the students, while simultaneously considering the needs of all the other students in the classroom. Rachel described this tension, and the search for creating a proper balance, in her journal reflections after the first day of teaching:

*When I had students come up front to speak out loud, I wanted to help them with pronunciation without losing the interest of the rest of the class. In order to keep the class' attention I tried to keep things moving but I think it would still be more beneficial to slow down. Since there were no volunteers to come up, I hope it was OK that I called on them to take turns up front since I think it's important to let each kid practice and have corrections made to help them. I think tomorrow I may try having groups of kids talk at a time during the conversation scenarios. (Rachel's reflection journal, Monday)*

During the daily "conversation" activity, Rachel and Carl attempted a similar strategy in their respective classrooms: provide individualized attention to students by approaching pairs of learners at their desks to read the conversation for the teacher. While this approach had the benefit of students receiving diagnostic attention directly from the volunteer lead teacher, it left the rest of the students in the classroom largely unattended for extended periods of time. In some classrooms, while the teacher attended to one pair of students, the volunteer classroom assistant or interpreter attended to other pairs of students; in other classrooms, this did not occur.

The volunteers benefited from observing Donna as she came in to the volunteers' classrooms with a daily music lesson. Her skills in managing the classroom often sparked a new energy among the students, most notably in Carl's classroom on Thursday, a day which he had written in his journal that "the children could not be motivated and did not want to speak English out loud." Notes from classroom observations identified several key classroom management techniques used by Donna: use of repetition and review from previous lessons to boost student confidence; use of clear and simple instructions; the selection of various groups (e.g., boys, girls, left side, right side, everyone) to encourage student participation through "competition"; and use of small call-and-response catch phrases to refocus students' attention towards a task. Donna also incorporated her knowledge of Thai language as a means to build rapport among the students, something which the other volunteers

could not emulate. However, notes from classroom observations indicated that all the volunteer lead teachers were able to successfully utilize Donna's techniques for refocusing the students' attention through call and response.

#### 5.1.2.4 Need for Effective Use of Effective Resources

On one hand, Carl, in his post-experience questionnaire, stated the following: "I felt that some of the material was a little advanced for the majority of the class, and if more materials were provided I could have picked an appropriate level." On the other hand, Pat wrote the following in her post-experience questionnaire: "The fifth graders had minor skills so there were more resources than I felt were necessary to use." In fact, the central issue was likely not the quantity of the resources – it was the need for volunteers to know how to use them effectively in their classroom with the English language learners.

In her reflection journal, group leader Donna recounted that approximately four months prior to the group's arrival to Thailand, she developed the English teaching schedule and resources with the consultation and collaboration of an experienced English teacher. During phone conferences with the volunteers prior to the trip, Donna was able to refer them to the English teaching schedule and explain in greater detail the characteristics of these resources and how the volunteers might use them in the classroom. At the orientation, Donna pulled out some of these resources for the volunteer lead teachers, giving them a brief demonstration of what they might do with these resources in their classroom.

Despite this preparation, the volunteers lacked an opportunity for an in-depth look at, or rehearsal of, the resources prior to entering the classroom on their first day of teaching. On Monday the challenge was compounded by a "runner system" in which volunteer classroom assistants attempted to swap the resources among the various classrooms throughout the afternoon. Seeing that this system led to a bottlenecking of the resources and appeared inconvenient and stressful to the volunteer lead teachers, on the second day a new system was implemented: lead teachers received all of their class resources at once, prior to entering the classroom.

While this new system relieved one challenge diagnosed on the initial day of classes, another challenge remained: the volunteers still received their set of classroom resources only minutes prior to entering the classroom. Particularly when the lead teacher had never used the resource in class before, it was difficult for him or her to know the characteristics of the resource, the vocabulary it contained, and the amount of time it would take to work through the resource. Rachel described this challenge in her post-experience questionnaire:

*Definitely the most challenging part of this week was the lack of prep time – the inability to prepare lessons before class time. I would have liked to have all the materials the night before to look them over and plan – even taking just a bit to think about how to explain the games to the kids and think of a few different ways to play each game to make it more or less challenging depending on how the class reacts to them. (Rachel's post-experience questionnaire)*

The resource that the volunteer teachers found most challenging to use effectively in their classroom was the set of conversation posters. In her Thursday journal reflections, Dianne wrote, "I find the conversations awkward – pick things

children would actually say.” Classroom observations confirmed that some of the dialogues would have been unusual in the context of this village. In Pat’s classroom, for example, after seminary professor Pai interpreted the question on the conversation poster (“Do you eat breakfast?”) into Thai, one of the fifth grade students exclaimed “กินพริก” (“I eat chili peppers.”). This answer was much different, however, from the response on the conversation poster: “Yes, I eat eggs and toast.” Thus, it appeared that the conversations strayed from the students’ linguistic needs based on the realities of their daily lives in the local context.

Although the conversation posters proved to be a challenge throughout the week, the volunteers found various ways to utilize the other resources in their respective classrooms. For instance, while one volunteer lead teacher used the “Alphabet Scrabble” letter cut-outs to focus on spelling vocabulary words, another volunteer lead teacher used the same resource as a tool for students to recognize the upper-case and lower-case pairings of letters. Volunteers generally utilized the van ride back to the resort each day after teaching to debrief and share feedback with one another about using the various resources. Dianne suggested in her post-experience questionnaire that a “tip sheet” for each resource would be helpful for the volunteers to recognize the various ways each resource could be used and modified according to the needs of the students.

#### 5.1.2.5 Need for a Clear Framework for English Programming

While the previous subcategories focused primarily on the in-class needs of the volunteer lead teachers, some general needs for English program development relevant to the volunteer teachers were also apparent. These needs include explicit teaching and learning goals, as well as a favorable teaching timeframe.

At the volunteers’ orientation, ministry coordinator Mark expressed his contentment in the English teaching plan that had been established “because it revolved around John 3:16.” Indeed, the Bible verse was weaved into numerous classroom activities throughout the week. Of the seven daily subjects on the English schedule, four of them (Word of God, music, Bible passage, art) included content closely related to the Biblical theme. With the Bible verse John 3:16 as the theme for the English program, an implicit goal may have existed – that students would learn and understand the Bible verse through repeated exposure of it throughout the week. However, there were no explicitly stated goals or benchmarks related to the theme, the individual class subjects, or even the English program in general (see Appendix J). As a result, the volunteer teachers had varying ideas of what should be achieved during their time in the classroom in relation to the John 3:16 theme, as demonstrated in their journal reflections:

*I stuck to the schedule. I started off with John 3:16 and wrote it up on the board... John 3:16 was difficult for the students to say and I feel I did not reach the goal of everyone being able to say it well. (Carl’s reflection journal, Monday)*

*I felt that using the sentence strip for that long verse (John 3:16) was pointless as correct relationships between capital and lower case letters couldn’t be made for lack of room in getting the entire verse entered. (Pat’s reflection journal, Monday)*

*I'm wondering how often to review John 3:16 – what is the goal? Should we be writing it on the board and explaining it every day? (Dianne's reflection journal, Wednesday)*

Similarly, there were no explicit goals for the daily subjects (i.e., conversation, games, and commands) unrelated to the John 3:16 theme. According to the prepared schedule, the class subject was the resource itself. On one hand, this enabled the teachers to use the resources according to how they diagnosed the students' needs. On the other hand, the volunteers, being untrained in English language teaching, lacked guidance on what possibilities existed for English language development. Consequently, the volunteer lead teachers showed uncertainty about the aims of the activities in their classes:

*It's really challenging to evaluate which activities are the most beneficial to them and which are not. I'm sure they retain English words better from certain types of activities than other activities but I don't know which they are. (Rachel's reflection journal, Monday)*

*At first I felt pressured to use a new resource each day in the secular subjects. Since each resource had its own vocabulary, I felt more learning could be achieved by using the same resource for more days in succession. This comes back to knowing the goal: learning or rapid exposure with incidental learning? (Pat's post-experience questionnaire)*

Another need for the English program was a favorable timeframe for conducting English classes. Prior to their first day of teaching, the volunteer group was informed that their teaching commitment would be three hours each afternoon, from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. After the first day of teaching, however, the group realized that the school day actually finished at 3:30 p.m. Still, the volunteer teachers were challenged by the length of time in the classroom. According to her reflection journal after the first day, Dianne was “a little worried I'd run out of things to do before time was up.” Volunteer group leader Donna also observed the challenges faced by the volunteer team and commented about it in subsequent journal entries:

*Today for ESL, I noticed fidgetiness... among the students. After the day's events were over, I heard a couple opinions that ESL shouldn't last so long each day. I can see that being a good thing. Teachers and students alike can get bored. Perhaps five days per week but only one to one-and-a-half hours per day. (Donna's reflection journal, Thursday)*

*I'd suggest that on future trips ESL (if in a school setting, or any setting?) be held for half as long. Both teachers and students would benefit from that. (Donna's reflection journal, Friday)*

### 5.1.3 Respect of the Local Context

As previously presented in Section 5.1.2.1, the *Local Context* was interpreted in the pre-arrival questionnaire as the highest relative area of concern for the volunteer lead teachers ( $\bar{x} = 1.56$ ). Likewise, the *Local Context* was also interpreted as the most problematic for the volunteers in the post-experience questionnaire ( $\bar{x} = 0.53$ ), as will be discussed further in Section 5.3. This next section addresses in more

detail some of the needs of the volunteer group in relation to the local context. The presentation of findings is organized under the following subcategories: need for awareness of local facilities and protocol; need for awareness of institutional needs; need for awareness of local student characteristics; and need for valuing mutual development, understanding, and participation.

#### 5.1.3.1 Need for Awareness of Local Facilities and Protocol

There is much evidence that the volunteer group members both desired and needed opportunities for learning about their new environment. On the day of the volunteers' arrival, once they had dropped off their bags at the hotel, ministry coordinator Mark oriented the volunteers to the services available to them near the hotel. Later, Mark and Missionary Sam, both regional participants, gave a brief orientation about some features of daily life that the volunteers would likely encounter throughout their stay in Thailand, including greeting people in a culturally appropriate way, receiving gifts from local people, and dealing with issues of hygiene within the local context. Several volunteer participants expressed aloud their gratitude for these pieces of information.

On the first day of English teaching, the volunteers gathered at the school for a morning meeting with Kanya, one of the school's two English teachers. Primarily, the meeting helped negotiate a solution to the complication of five classrooms of students but only four volunteer lead teachers. As a result of the meeting, it was decided that Pat would use the large cafeteria to teach the two classrooms of fifth grade students together as one large group. While this meeting clarified the teaching space each of the volunteers would use for the week, it lacked an orientation to the particulars of the local school that would be relevant for the volunteers in their classroom role as teachers.

Consequently, the volunteers reported that their lack of awareness to the protocol of the local school created some challenges for them. For instance, Pat reported in her reflection journal having forgotten to give the students a break to use the bathroom. Moreover, she was unfamiliar with the location of bathrooms near her classroom (the cafeteria), which was situated away from the rest of the classrooms. Also unfamiliar to the volunteers was knowledge of local procedures for the start and dismissal of classes. Rachel reported in an informal interview that on the first day of class, a Thai staff member sitting in her classroom had taken care of dismissal. On the second day, without the assistance of the local teacher, she was unsure of the protocol for classroom dismissal.

#### 5.1.3.2 Need for Awareness of Institutional Needs

The volunteers recognized that they were largely unfamiliar with the local school's expectations for the volunteers' English teaching. In comments written in the post-experience questionnaire, Pat remarked that she "didn't have a clear idea of what the school's goals and expectations were for the program beforehand." Further, both Dianne and Rachel reported that they had no knowledge of the school's regular English curriculum.

Interviews between the researcher and local school staff generated some deeper insight into the school's needs and expectations. The first semi-structured interview was conducted with Oat, a member of the teaching staff. Oat stated that among the constraints of the school was the staff's own limited ability to use and

teach English correctly. For that reason, he believed that the volunteers, as native English speakers, would be able to provide a service that the school could not provide via its current staff. In addition to native-speaker proficiency, Oat recommended two other characteristics as “minimum requirements” for the volunteers: that they teach with both heart and dedication. While he described it as a fortunate experience to have the volunteers come to teach English at the school, he also asked about the nature of the volunteer trip: was it just a short-term project, or would there be longer-term connections with English teaching volunteers? Oat expressed his own desire that the school could acquire native English speaking volunteer teachers for a period of at least one year.

The second staff interview was conducted with Kanya, one of the school’s two English teachers. Kanya stated that the school’s goal of having this project (initiated by the proposition of a member of the village church to have the volunteers teach English at the school) was to give students the experience of practicing English with native-speaking foreigners. She reported that instead of informing the volunteers what to teach, the school left the English programming wide open for the volunteer group. In her opinion, it was important for the English programming to be fun, as well as basic, for the students. Kanya indicated that from what she had seen on the first day of classes with the volunteers, the level of English teaching was too difficult for the students. Kanya re-emphasized the students’ basic English level and the further constraint that, as part of the national curriculum, the students receive just two instructional hours of English each week. She declared that, with so little weekly instructional time, her students had difficulty in remembering even the most basic greetings in English.

### 5.1.3.3 Need for Awareness of Local Student Characteristics

As the week progressed, the volunteers grew in their awareness of the characteristics of the students in their classroom. Already from the first day the volunteers were able to diagnose particular phonemes that were difficult for the students to pronounce. They further reported how they could begin to distinguish the different levels of proficiency within their classrooms, and moreover how the learners tended to work cooperatively with their classmates. On the other hand, in the final entry of their reflection journals, three of the volunteer lead teachers identified their surprise when, in their “Word of God” lesson, the students displayed great difficulty in reading aloud in the Thai language, an activity which was intended as a linguistic “break” for the students. Thus, while in some regards the volunteers made great strides in learning about their students, at the end of the week there were still significant gaps of knowledge about the students and their needs.

The semi-structured interviews with local teaching staff offered more detailed information about the students and their backgrounds. Teacher Oat spoke about the ethnic and linguistic nature of the students at the highland school. All the students were of the ethnic Hmong group, and Oat estimated that approximately 70% of their daily communication was in the Hmong language, particularly at home with their families. He estimated about 29% of their language usage was in Thai, further noting the students’ particular weakness in Thai writing skills. Oat estimated the remaining 1% of language usage to be English – when the students were in English class at the school. While this was the present situation for the students, Oat described the greater likelihood that the students would need English as part of their future, especially in consideration of the impending ASEAN Economic Community, which will spur



greater mobility among people in the countries of Southeast Asia and will use English as its *lingua franca*.

The interview with English teacher Kanya reiterated some of the claims of Oat, including the few present opportunities that the local students have to interact in English outside of the classroom. While other lowland students may have opportunities for supplementary English study, these highland students lack access to similar resources and have responsibilities helping their families with farm work outside of class time. Despite their present limited interaction with English speakers, the village is near a popular tourist destination, and Kanya speculated that students may have opportunities to use English through work as tour guides in the future.

The students themselves tendered their perspectives of the perceived relevance of English language learning through the completion of a Likert-scale student questionnaire distributed on the final day of the volunteer-taught English program. (See Appendix D for the student questionnaire.) The questionnaire was completed by 107 students in the fifth, sixth and seventh grade classrooms, with the aid of the homeroom teachers administering the questionnaire in their respective classrooms. Below, Tables 7-9 present the quantitatively analyzed results of the questionnaire. The results are presented within their respective categories: English language need, learner motivation, and teaching evaluation.

**Table 7 Student Questionnaire - English Language Need  
Statements Ranked in Descending Order of Mean**

Statement	Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	S.D.	Interpretation
10. My future job opportunities will depend on my ability to communicate in English.	3.10	0.82	Agree
1. I rarely use English outside of class.	2.99	0.98	Agree
13. In the area which I live, it's difficult for people who don't know English to be successful.	2.07	1.20	Neither agree nor disagree
7. My family knows very few English speakers.	2.01	1.41	Neither agree nor disagree
4. There are many people around the area I live who use English to communicate.	1.35	1.32	Disagree

Interpretive key:

0.00 - 0.80	= Strongly disagree
0.81 - 1.60	= Disagree
1.61 - 2.40	= Neither agree nor disagree
2.41 - 3.20	= Agree
3.21 - 4.00	= Strongly agree

The results from the *English Language Need* category in Table 7 largely substantiate the local teaching staff's assessment of the students' present and future English needs. The students indicated that presently they make little use of the English language (Statement 1:  $\bar{x} = 2.99$ ), as there are not many people in the area who use English as a means of communication (Statement 4:  $\bar{x} = 1.35$ ; Statement 7:  $\bar{x} = 2.01$ ). Further, a present knowledge of English may not be requisite to successful living (Statement 13:  $\bar{x} = 2.07$ ). However, the students did perceive a future need for English, particularly as a means for acquiring a desirable job in the future (Statement 10:  $\bar{x} = 3.10$ ).

**Table 8 Student Questionnaire - Learner Motivation  
Statements Ranked in Descending Order of Mean**

Statement	Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	S.D.	Interpretation
2. English is one of my favorite subjects at school.	3.12	0.83	Agree
11. I like to practice speaking English.	3.08	0.89	Agree
8. I think I will use English a lot in my future.	3.05	1.00	Agree
5. I generally don't like to study English.	1.89	1.20	Neither agree nor disagree
14. I will never be good at English.	1.66	1.01	Neither agree nor disagree

The student responses presented in Table 8 are categorized under *Learner Motivation*. First, the students indicated a generally favorable impression of English as a school subject (Statement 12:  $\bar{x} = 3.12$ ). They marked a general tendency that they enjoy the practice of speaking English (Statement 11:  $\bar{x} = 3.08$ ), though the act of *studying* it may be less enjoyable (Statement 5:  $\bar{x} = 1.89$ ). The students also indicated their belief that they will make frequent use of English in their future (Statement 8:  $\bar{x} = 3.05$ ). The students' response to Statement 14 ( $\bar{x} = 1.66$ ) signals that they do not hold overwhelmingly defeatist notions of their ability to develop their English skills. This differs from the impressions of both local teachers interviewed, who said that English was too difficult of a subject for the students.

**Table 9 Student Questionnaire - Teaching Evaluation  
Statements Ranked in Descending Order of Mean**

Statement	Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	S.D.	Interpretation
3. I had fun in the English class this week with my foreign teacher.	3.61	0.60	Strongly agree
15. The activities we did in class with the foreign teacher helped me learn English.	3.59	0.53	Strongly agree
9. The foreign teacher I had in class this week had good teaching skills.	3.19	0.85	Agree
12. I couldn't understand what the foreign teacher was saying.	1.86	1.18	Neither agree nor disagree
6. It's too difficult to learn English with the foreign teacher.	1.59	1.19	Disagree

The results from the statements categorized within the *Teaching Evaluation* portion of the questionnaire indicate that the students perceived the experience with their volunteer teacher to be a positive English learning experience. There was a strong indication that the learning activities with the volunteer teacher were both fun (Statement 3:  $\bar{x} = 3.61$ ) and beneficial for language learning (Statement 15:  $\bar{x} = 3.59$ ). Though not as strongly indicated, the students also marked that their volunteer teacher had good teaching skills (Statement 9:  $\bar{x} = 3.19$ ), and further, that English language learning was not too difficult with the volunteer teacher (Statement 6:  $\bar{x} = 1.59$ ). Less clear was the ability of the students to understand their volunteer teachers (Statement 12:  $\bar{x} = 1.86$ ), which supports the earlier evidence that the volunteers needed to provide more comprehensible English language for their students.

#### 5.1.3.4 Need for Valuing Mutual Development, Understanding, and Participation

Some of the volunteers expressed a desire for something more profound than providing a linguistic spark in the English language classroom. For example, during the second half of the week, as volunteer lead teacher Rachel, volunteer assistant Claire, and seminarian-interpreter Ton transitioned out of the sixth grade classroom, they transitioned into a role as soccer players alongside the students on the field behind the school. In her final journal entry, Dianne reflected that it was “too bad that we couldn’t have shared a meal together – parents and teachers at the end, and kids could play.” It appeared that the volunteers sensed the opportunity to build rapport with local participants as a meaningful complement to their presence as English teachers.

The week of volunteer activity also presented the opportunity to foster mutual development with another group of participants – the seminary students and staff who were alongside the volunteers. The role of the seminarians as classroom interpreters has already been shown in Section 5.1.2.2 to be considered by the volunteer teachers as an essential task. However, the extent to which the volunteers and the seminarians worked in partnership with one another is worth a further look.

The ability for the volunteer teacher and the classroom interpreter to work together was a skill in the making. On Tuesday morning, Carl remarked to the researcher that his classroom interpreter “didn’t do a very good job yesterday.” That same morning, his interpreter Sam remarked to the researcher that he had seen “lots of problems” and that “the teachers were not ready in the classroom.” Clearly, at times there lacked a mutual understanding and sense of shared responsibility among the volunteers and the interpreters. Dianne’s post-experience questionnaire further reveals her interpretation of the constraints of working with classroom interpreters:

*Anyone (I think) who teaches Sunday school and enjoys it would probably enjoy this as long as they were patient with a translator... Sometimes my words got lost in translation. My few words took the translator a long time to say. (Dianne's post-experience questionnaire)*

At the orientation on the day of the volunteers’ arrival, ministry coordinator Mark indicated that “the primary purpose [of the volunteer trip] is to assist the mission in volunteer efforts.” While this would seemingly place the volunteer activities in a role of serving the needs of the church mission and its personnel, it may be that the reverse was equally the volunteers’ understanding. Judy’s comments from her reflection journal signal her belief that the human resources (i.e., the seminarians) from the church ministry were a strain on the project:

*It costs a lot for us as volunteers to get here so we have to make it as fun and interesting as we can and yet have the mission get full value as well... I think we had too many from the seminary. The more we have, the more it costs the volunteers, and besides, there is only so much for them to do. (Judy's reflection journal, Monday)*

The researcher shared his own thoughts about the potential misunderstandings between the volunteers and the classroom interpreters through dialogue in group leader Donna’s reflection journal:

*A few times this week my heart has gone out to the seminary students in the English classroom. They have done an excellent job this week as interpreters in the classroom, something they may not have been expecting or preparing to be such a vital role as it has been this week. At times the volunteer teachers may be telling the interpreters “tell my students to (insert something unfamiliar to Thai culture)” or explaining the Bible stories in a way the seminary students recognize as not conducive to reaching the Thai/Hmong hearts and minds. The seminary students may seem hesitant to the volunteer teacher, or may have difficulty translating an appropriate message to the students. In the meantime the volunteer may leave thinking “my interpreter didn’t do a very good job.” I say that only because I’ve heard it a few times this week but I also see the dilemma the interpreters have had. (Researcher’s response to Donna’s reflection journal, Wednesday)*

In response, Donna shared her interpretation of the possible misunderstanding:

*I get your thought on the seminary students and their translating. I think the volunteers get it, too. I think their comments... are not meant as criticism of the seminary students’ translating abilities as they are of their own lack of understanding the language. (Donna’s reflection journal, Thursday)*

Consequently, the international, regional, and local participants in the project needed mutual understanding as joint investors in the project. All participants, whether the international volunteers, the seminary students, the local school staff and students, and other varied participants (including the researcher), were working both from their strengths and their limitations. Preparing to address the needs of the volunteers meant not only focusing on the volunteers themselves – there also existed a need to orient and support all the other participants for their various roles in the project.

## 5.2 Results of Research Question Two

The second research question asked the following: What roles of responsibility do the various participants take on to address the needs of the short-term international volunteers? The findings concerning this research question are presented under three themes: the roles taken by the STIVELFs to meet the needs of the classroom; the many and varied roles of the volunteer group leader throughout the project; and the various roles of the non-STIVELF participants.

### 5.2.1 Roles Taken by STIVELFs To Meet the Needs of the Classroom

This section, divided into two parts, addresses how the volunteer lead teachers sought to fulfill their own needs related to their volunteer experience. The first part describes the volunteer lead teachers’ initial approaches to meeting their own needs. The second part conveys the volunteers’ developing capacity to meet their own needs through the progression of the weeklong teaching project.

#### 5.2.1.1 Initial Approaches to Meeting Generalized Needs

Group leader Donna had a vision for the non-profit organization through which the volunteers came: “The nature of this ministry is to attract the layworker [in this case, the international volunteer] and give him opportunities. If I’d only recruit teachers, I defeat the purpose of the ministry” (from Donna’s reflection journal,

Tuesday). For that reason, limited teaching experience was not characterized by the group leader as a burden, but more as an opportunity. Experience and qualifications were not the gatekeepers for joining the volunteer project. Instead, the ability to pay for the expenses of the trip was a primary gatekeeper. Ministry coordinator Mark reported in an informal interview that if the volunteers could pay, they could come. Following that, the question of “what can you do?” would be asked, and a role would be established accordingly.

As noted in the pre-arrival questionnaires, the four volunteers who would be lead English teachers began their preparations for the trip by seeking out the support of others, especially the group leader Donna. Carl remarked that besides the completion of necessary paperwork, his preparations primarily consisted of seeking information from Donna. Rachel mentioned the various ways she was attempting to get a clearer sense of what she would encounter in Thailand: reading about Thai history and Buddhist religion, learning about common ingredients in Thai cooking, and searching for news articles with current event information about Thailand. As for the most helpful resource, she stated:

*The most helpful thing I've found is speaking with Donna on the phone about previous trips to Thailand she has made and how this experience went in the past. Regarding the ESL teaching, I really appreciated talking with her and going through the schedule for the three hours we'll be teaching in the school. Having her explain the activities and give examples of what we'll be doing and what to talk about has been very helpful. (Rachel's pre-arrival questionnaire)*

Pat remarked that, besides thinking about her past classroom experiences, her teaching preparations included looking over the schedule of activities sent by Donna. She also reported having sought teaching ideas from relatives who have taught English abroad. Dianne, who would be taking lead roles in both the morning health care work as well as the afternoon English classroom, identified “talking to anyone who has traveled overseas, especially Thailand, and missionaries” as helpful in her preparations for coming.

On the initial weekend, while the volunteers were tending to various set-up responsibilities, volunteer Claire (who had primary responsibilities in the health care portion of the volunteer trip) approached Pat and asked about her readiness for the upcoming English teaching. Pat replied, “[Classroom prep] is going fine. Donna has done everything for us. All we have to do is repeat it.” Thus, an initial assumption among the volunteers may have been that their responsibilities lay in the execution of pre-planned scheduling and resources.

#### 5.2.1.2 Towards Greater Responsibility in the English Classroom

After the first day of English classes, the volunteer lead teachers typically sought out increasing levels of responsibility. For example, Carl, desiring to improve his classroom teaching after the first day, recounted the following in his reflection journal on Tuesday: “I spent all morning finding a way to make the children more comfortable in addition to figuring out a more effective way to use my translators.” To accomplish this, Carl sat down with two seminarians to learn some basic introductory phrases in the Hmong language. He hoped to use what he learned in the

classroom that same afternoon to make his English language learners feel more at ease, given his own attempts at speaking their language.

By the second day, the teachers also began to show more autonomy in managing their classroom schedule. For instance, Dianne supplemented class time with activities of her own, including making use of the violin she brought from home and telling the students a fairy tale. In her reflection journal on Wednesday, Rachel noted how she sought to rearrange the schedule to match the energy levels in her classroom: "I changed the schedule a bit and tried conversation earlier to see if it would work better. They were less tired but I still didn't like it." She showed further responsibility in lesson preparation, asking Donna if she could receive her teaching materials in the evening to prepare for the next day's teaching. Pat's comments in the post-experience questionnaire indicate that she also sensed a growing need for the volunteers to take responsibility for more than just "repeating" Donna's preparatory work in the classroom. She wrote: "Perhaps some input by volunteers into planning the actual class sessions would give some 'ownership' of their goals for the sessions."

Moreover, the volunteer teachers made increasing strides in learning from one another. After the first day of classes, the entire volunteer team was gathered in a meeting back at the resort to process their initial day of work. On the days that followed, the volunteers were not assembled for a formal meeting; however, they used the van ride back to the resort as an opportunity to process their classroom experiences, troubleshoot, and gain ideas from one another. The volunteers' responses in the post-experience questionnaire indicate that this informal sharing was an integral part of their teacher development:

*It was nice talking with the other teachers after each day to compare how the day went and to get ideas on how to do activities, what to say, etc. (Rachel's post-experience questionnaire)*

*Talking with the other teachers helped me a lot. We shared ideas and I implemented a few of them for the class's benefit. (Carl's post-experience questionnaire)*

While the volunteer lead teachers took on increasing responsibilities over the course of the week, there is also evidence to indicate that their overall capabilities increased as well. One source of evidence is Claire, a volunteer who took an assisting role in the Rachel's classroom on the first day but had health care responsibilities for the majority of the remaining afternoons. Claire wrote the following after the third day of English classes:

*Today I was once again busy with wound care – because of this I only made it to the last 30 minutes of ESL. It was crazy to me to see the kids and to notice just how much progress they have made over the last two days – their pronunciation, memory & confidence are so much higher. Also to see how much more confident Rachel is in her teaching. (Claire's reflection journal, Wednesday)*

Likewise, Donna stated in her post-experience questionnaire that she "enjoyed seeing the volunteers get more confident with the project as each day passed." In addition, in the final entry of her reflection journal, she described some of the ways in which she observed Carl transform through the experience:

*Carl has come around and really tried hard to be a teacher. As the week progressed he asked fewer questions, and I was very pleased with that. He put his all into the work and I wouldn't have asked for more. I like his positive attitude. (Donna's reflection journal, Friday)*

In summary, the volunteer lead teachers began their preparations in rather generalized ways, with high dependency on the group leader and adherence to the teaching schedule. As the week progressed, these lead teachers made strides in taking greater responsibility for classroom preparations and decisions. Simultaneously, they experienced noticeable progress in their students and in themselves.

## 5.2.2 Group Leader's Many and Varied Roles

This section describes the variety of ways in which the group leader addressed the needs of the volunteers. Included are accounts of the pre-arrival and on-site responsibilities, as well as pertinent constraints faced by the group leader in meeting the needs of the volunteers.

### 5.2.2.1 Pre-arrival Responsibilities

Prior to the volunteer group's arrival to Thailand, group leader Donna carried out a significant amount of foundational work that made the volunteer opportunity possible for the international participants. While she was in the U.S.A, Donna coordinated with ministry coordinator Mark (in Thailand) to prepare the trip plan, including the timeframe, location, volunteer opportunities, and accommodations. Donna solicited the help of an individual with English teaching experience abroad (the Czech Republic) to develop a five-day teaching plan, while also gathering the classroom resources used in that plan. She also confirmed with Mark that the teaching plan was in line with the mission of the church organization. Meanwhile, Donna maintained an active schedule of traveling presentations since, as primary recruiter, she had to find interested volunteers to participate as well as financial support for the trip.

As the international participants prepared for their journey to Thailand, Donna also had the responsibility of informing them of the trip details. She notified the volunteers of guidelines for packing, as well as trip regulations, based largely on the precedents set in previous trips. Donna communicated with the group collectively through email; she also encouraged volunteers to contact her individually through email and phone for whatever support they needed. Donna made provisions to contact each of the volunteer teachers to outline the teaching plan and discuss the volunteers' questions or concerns. She reported in an informal interview that these phone conversations gave her an opportunity to gauge the readiness of the volunteers for teaching. In particular, she felt confident about Rachel's and Pat's potential in the classroom, but was concerned that Carl and Dianne would need extra support in the classroom.

### 5.2.2.2 On-site Responsibilities

Upon the arrival of the international volunteer group to Thailand, Donna maintained a host of responsibilities. During the orientation, she informed the group of scheduling plans and managed the preparatory work to organize the resources the volunteer team would use for the health care, English teaching, and weekend Bible

teaching projects. Donna oriented the volunteer lead teachers to the resources they would use in the English classroom, conveying tips how to use some of the resources. Moreover, on the initial weekend she purchased additional items for the trip and deliberated logistical aspects of travel and volunteer activities with ministry coordinator Mark.

Donna's load of responsibility did not diminish once the week of volunteer activities began. On Monday, Donna took a lead role facilitating the morning meeting among the volunteers and the local English teacher Kanya. After a hectic first afternoon of trying to swap resources between classrooms, Donna rearranged the management of the resources in subsequent days so that each volunteer teacher would receive all his or her resources at the start of the afternoon. At the end of each school day, she collected the resources from the volunteers so they would be ready for redistribution the following day. Each afternoon, Donna also traveled to each of the four classrooms to teach a music lesson. Donna continued to make logistical adjustments throughout the week, both at the local school and other areas of volunteer programming. Given her position as the group leader, she was also naturally a "go-to" resource for volunteers who had concerns and questions about their work responsibilities or more general information.

### 5.2.2.3 Constraints of the Group Leader Position

Various factors limited the degree to which group leader Donna was able to execute responsibilities to her desired level. One such constraint was the limitation of time. Prior to the volunteers' arrival, Donna had informed the volunteers the following:

*When we arrive in Chiang Rai we'll check in to our hotel, 'rest' for about 5 minutes and then go to Mark's house. We'll be organizing all our supplies for the week, making a shopping list of things we'll be needing and also presenting the ESL lessons. We'll be giving each other critiques on presentation and strategies for things that can be done in the classroom. I think this is a great idea for all ESL teachers. Why? You've never taught ESL before and getting all the advice/help you can is a good thing. (Donna, email correspondence)*

However, the intention to have the volunteers practice teaching did not reach fruition on the initial day of orientation, nor did it come to pass on the following day. Numerous other activities, planned and unplanned, filled the weekend schedule instead. In her reflection journal, Donna expressed a desire to have a group orientation prior to the international participants' arrival to Thailand, as a means to counteract the short preparation time while abroad. However, she recognized that, too, did not seem feasible given the financial constraints of both the volunteers and the volunteer organization (a further limiting factor frequently expressed by Donna).

Another constraint of the group leader was a limited ability to predict the volunteers' quality of teaching. In her reflection journal on Monday, Donna acknowledged that "even teachers aren't always able to teach." Still, she may have initially overestimated Pat's potential as an English teacher for this volunteer project. Since there were five classrooms of students but only four volunteers assigned roles as lead teachers, Pat was asked to "double-up" by combining the fifth grade classrooms, given her prior years of school teaching. Pat's struggles in the English



language classroom came as a surprise and disappointment: “My own personal, maybe professional, complaint is with Pat. I expected a better style of teaching than what I’m seeing” (Donna’s reflection journal, Wednesday). That expectation may have come from an assumption that the qualities of an experienced school teacher are easily transferrable to the language learning classroom, without recognizing the characteristics of the language learning classroom that require a specialized set of teacher traits.

A further constraint of the group leader position was in the area of professional interests. Donna related through informal interview that while the planning, recruiting, and fundraising were among her favorite responsibilities, she did not particularly like the role of teaching. Coupled with this teaching role was the preparation of individuals who would serve as volunteer teachers. Donna was acutely aware of her own limitations in this area, which she recounted both early in the week and at the conclusion of the project:

*One thing I find/found personally frustrating was teaching the non-teacher HOW to teach. Having prepared the project, I thought I’d done it in such a way that even the non-teacher would think it a breeze to teach. Going through it with them – here I must say that a couple of them only needed one explanation. My point is for those who needed repeated explanation – seemed a bother at times only because of my thoughts on the project. (Donna’s reflection journal, Monday)*

*I did not “enjoy” my own frustration with teaching the non-teacher how to teach. That is no fault of theirs. I take full responsibility for that emotion. I didn’t expect to have that feeling. (Donna’s post-experience questionnaire)*

In summary, the group leader was a primary bearer of responsibility in identifying and addressing the needs of the volunteers. In her role, Donna took on a vast set of responsibilities both prior to the trip and through the duration of the volunteers’ stay. Meanwhile, factors such as time, finances, capacity to predict the volunteers’ teaching ability, and professional interests acted as constraints on the group leader’s capacity to meet the volunteers’ needs to the degree she had envisaged.

### 5.2.3 Roles of Non-STIVELFs in Supporting STIVELFs

This section will present how other individuals also sought to meet the needs of the volunteer lead teachers. The section is divided into three parts: the responsibilities taken by the other international volunteer participants, by the regional team, and by local participants.

#### 5.2.3.1 Responsibilities Taken by Other International Volunteer Participants

Other international volunteer participants, those who were not lead teachers, took varying roles to support the lead teachers in the English classroom. During the five-day program, each volunteer lead teacher typically had at least one other international volunteer participant in his or her classroom. Since these volunteer classroom assistants did not have any particular mandate for how to carry out their assisting roles, from classroom observations it appeared largely dependent upon the lead teacher how, or if, the volunteer classroom assistants were used in the classroom.

Dianne often used her son Pieter as a resource in the sixth grade classroom, attempting to inspire the students to greater participation by seeing Pieter's attempts at speaking Thai. Volunteer classroom assistant Martha generally took an observer's role in the back corner of Pat's classroom throughout the week; the researcher's classroom observations indicated that Pat never called on Martha's assistance in the classroom. Volunteer classroom assistant Claire reported in her post-experience questionnaire that "I found that I didn't know the lesson plans ahead of time but I more helped out Rachel with handing out supplies, giving demonstrations, or just working with the kids."

The varying styles of aid provided by the volunteer classroom assistants also may have been a reflection of their motivations for participation in the volunteer trip. For instance, Claire marked "non-applicable" for some statements on the pre-arrival questionnaire regarding the English programming, explaining: "I am coming on this trip to primarily function in the free clinic nursing side. I will only be an assistant with the ESL portion of the trip." Martha did not complete the Likert-scale portion of the questionnaire; instead, she wrote: "N/A - I'm doing medical." With primary responsibilities and motivations in other aspects of the trip, the volunteer classroom assistants appeared not to take on the same personal burden of establishing a successful language learning environment to the extent that the volunteer lead teachers did.

#### 5.2.3.2 Responsibilities Taken by Regional Participants

Thus far the discussion of addressing the volunteers' needs has centered on roles taken by the international participants. To be sure, other individuals outside of the international volunteer group took on numerous responsibilities as well. What follows is a non-exhaustive description of how members of the regional team took on responsibilities to meet the needs of the volunteers.

Ministry coordinator Mark was one of the primary bearers of responsibility in addressing the needs of the volunteers. Prior to the group's arrival to Thailand, Mark maintained regular communication with group leader Donna. Among other matters, he assisted in arranging the volunteers' accommodations, relayed information between Donna and village leaders at the church and school, and advised on volunteer programming issues, including the planned English teaching schedule. During the volunteers' stay in Thailand, Mark took on further roles: he led several orientation sessions, including introductory information about the local culture and the English teaching program. Throughout the trip, he was a source of insider information to the volunteers, and several of the volunteers noted in their post-experience questionnaires Mark's helpfulness as a cultural resource. He also led the volunteer group in spiritual meditations on occasion, and along with Donna he was a primary bearer of daily announcements to the group. Moreover, Mark served as a chauffeur for the volunteers throughout the week. As he indicated through an informal interview, his primary role during the volunteers' work time was that of "observer." He reported using that opportunity to write up a list of suggestions to be implemented for future volunteer groups.

The staff and students of the seminary in Chiang Rai also took on various responsibilities in meeting the needs of the international volunteers. Members of the seminary staff formed part of the welcoming and pick-up team as the volunteers arrived to the airport. They offered insider cultural advice, served as a primary relational link between the volunteers and the regional culture, and interpreted

between volunteers and non-English (Thai and Hmong) speakers. While these contributions generally appeared to be well-received, there were some instances when misunderstandings occurred. For example, some volunteer participants were critical of seminary staff member Ving's attempt to have the volunteer group order food "Thai-style" (communal dishes rather than individually ordered plates) one evening, particularly because the final cost of that meal per person was roughly two times the cost of previous dinners that week.

The seminary staff and students with relatively higher English proficiency further served as interpreters each afternoon in the English classrooms. At times they offered advice to the volunteer teachers: Pat noted in her post-experience questionnaire how "the interpreters repeatedly stressed to me to take two to three words at a time in the memory verse to explain the meaning thoroughly before memorizing." On other occasions, the seminary staff and students had critiques of the volunteers' approach in the classroom but chose not to report them directly to the volunteer. Missionary Sam and seminary student Toey, for instance, confided in the researcher about problems they had seen in the volunteers' teaching and the English programming in general. Finally, some of the seminary students, particularly those with less English proficiency, had very little overall interaction with the volunteer group throughout the week in the village.

### 5.2.3.3 Responsibilities Taken by Local Participants

The local participants, that is, individuals from the village school and church, also took on responsibilities for addressing the volunteers' needs. One such task was the provision for the volunteers' physical needs. The local church took responsibility for providing a daily midday meal for the volunteer group. The meals consisted of customary Hmong dishes, giving the volunteers an experiential taste of the local culture. On the final weekday of work, the local church spent extra money to prepare a Hmong meal that they considered special, and the costs of this meal were quite high relative to the local income. The local school staff likewise made provisions to accommodate for the physical needs of the volunteers, as well as to make them feel more welcome. Each day staff set up an additional table from which the volunteers could get cold water, as well as hot water to make instant coffee.

The local administration and staff extended a large amount of liberty to the volunteer group in both the setup and execution of the English teaching project. As reported by local staff members via interview, the school deferred to the ability of the native English speaking group to prepare the curriculum for the weeklong English project. Consequently, the teaching plan was based on the volunteer group's preferences rather than the school's established curriculum. Ideally, as local staff teacher Oat reported, the school should notify the volunteer group of the present curriculum so that the volunteer group could make informed curricular plans. During the first few days of the week, local school staff sat in the afternoon English classes as observers, and, as needed, assistants. As the week progressed, the local staff sat in the volunteers' English classrooms with less frequency. At the close of the final day of teaching, the local school administration and staff presented the volunteer group with a framed, Hmong-stitched pattern. Such an act likely fostered a sense of closure for the volunteers as they prepared to depart from the village.

### 5.3 Additional Findings

Thus far, the presentation of findings has made extensive use of data collected from each of the research instruments, with one notable exception: the quantitative findings from the post-experience questionnaire. As there is a seemingly inconsistent, “problematic” nature to these findings, they provide an opportunity for extended discussion. This section shall present and discuss the findings from the quantitatively analyzed portion of the post-experience questionnaire.

The post-experience questionnaire was distributed to the international participants upon their return from the village to Chiang Rai, two days after their final day of teaching English at the village school. The 32 Likert-scale statements on the post-experience questionnaire closely reflected those from the pre-arrival questionnaire, with notable two divergences. First, the past tense was used in the post-experience statements to describe feelings about events which had already transpired. Second, whereas the pre-arrival questionnaire asked respondents to indicate the level to which items posed as “concerns” regarding their future engagement, the post-experience questionnaire asked respondents to indicate the level to which statements had posed as “problems” in their experience.

All the international volunteer group members except one (Judy) participated in the post-experience questionnaire. Among the returned questionnaires, two of the non-lead teacher participants (Martha and Pieter) did not complete the Likert-scale portion of the questionnaire, and three of the non-lead teacher volunteers (Donna, Jeannie, and Riley) marked “not a problem” for all 32 statements. Thus, only one non-lead teacher volunteer (Claire) had any variation in her responses to the Likert-scale statements. On the other hand, the four volunteer lead teachers (Pat, Dianne, Carl, and Rachel) had given complete sets of varied responses. For that reason, it was deemed appropriate to scope the quantitative analysis of the questionnaires to the four lead teachers. (The pre-arrival and post-experience Likert-scale responses of all the international participants can be found in Appendix K.) Below, Table 10 presents the interpretation of the quantitative results for the five categories of Likert-scale statements on the post-experience questionnaire.

**Table 10 Post-Experience Volunteer Questionnaire - Results from Volunteer Lead Teachers Categories Ranked in Descending Order of Mean**

Category	Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	S.D.	Interpretation
Local Context	0.53	0.77	Not a Problem
Learners	0.30	0.54	Not a Problem
Delivery of Lessons	0.24	0.44	Not a Problem
Teaching and Learning Resources	0.13	0.35	Not a Problem
Aspects of Teaching and Learning English	0.09	0.30	Not a Problem

Interpretive key:

- 0.00 - 0.75 = Not a Problem
- 0.76 - 1.50 = Minor Problem
- 1.51 - 2.25 = Problem
- 2.26 - 3.00 = Major Problem

As seen in Table 10, when the statements are grouped by category, all of the categories in the post-experience questionnaire are interpreted as “not a problem” ( $\bar{x} \leq 0.75$ ). This interpretation is markedly different from the interpretation of pre-arrival

concerns among the same four volunteer lead teachers (refer to Table 1), in which the *Local Context* was a “concern” ( $\bar{x} = 1.56$ ), while the four other categories were interpreted as a “minor concern” ( $0.76 \leq \bar{x} \leq 1.50$ ). Below, Table 11 offers a more detailed inspection of the 32 Likert-scale statements according to their difference of change across the two questionnaires.

**Table 11 Difference Between Pre-Arrival and Post-Experience Questionnaires Statements Ranked in Descending Order of Difference**

#	Statement	Pre-Mean	Pre-Interpretation	Post-Mean	Post-Interpretation	Difference ( <i>d</i> )
15	My students (will have / had) very different levels of English proficiency.	0.50	Not a Concern	0.67	Not a Problem	+0.17
23	I (am unsure of / didn't know) the expectations of the local school administration.	1.25	Minor Concern	1.25	Minor Problem	0.00
10	My students (won't / didn't) maintain interest during class time.	0.67	Not a Concern	0.50	Not a Problem	-0.17
4	I (feel that I'll spend / spent) too much of the class period talking.	0.25	Not a Concern	0.00	Not a Problem	-0.25
8	I (am unsure how to / was unable to) make effective use of the resources in the classroom.	0.25	Not a Concern	0.00	Not a Problem	-0.25
9	I (won't / didn't) make effective use of the board.	0.25	Not a Concern	0.00	Not a Problem	-0.25
16	My students (will misbehave / misbehaved) in class.	0.50	Not a Concern	0.25	Not a Problem	-0.25
24	I (am unsure / didn't know) how my English teaching (will / would) fit with the local English curriculum.	1.00	Minor Concern	0.75	Not a Problem	-0.25
1	(I'll have / I had) trouble following through with my lesson plan.	0.75	Not a Concern	0.25	Not a Problem	-0.50
6	There (will be / were) insufficient teaching or learning resources provided for me.	0.75	Not a Concern	0.25	Not a Problem	-0.50
2	(I'll have / I had) difficulty managing time in class.	1.25	Minor Concern	0.50	Not a Problem	-0.75
3	I (am / was) unsure how I should respond to students' language errors in class.	1.00	Minor Concern	0.25	Not a Problem	-0.75
12	My students (won't / didn't) understand what (I'm / I was) saying.	1.50	Minor Concern	0.67	Not a Problem	-0.83
5	(I feel that my lessons won't / My lessons didn't) flow smoothly from activity to activity.	1.25	Minor Concern	0.25	Not a Problem	-1.00
13	My students (will speak / spoke) a language other than English in the classroom.	1.33	Minor Concern	0.33	Not a Problem	-1.00
14	My students (will lack / lacked) motivation in learning English.	1.00	Minor Concern	0.00	Not a Problem	-1.00
17	The size of the class (will be / was) difficult to manage effectively.	1.25	Minor Concern	0.25	Not a Problem	-1.00

**Table 11 Difference Between Pre-Arrival and Post-Experience Questionnaires Statements Ranked in Descending Order of Difference**

#	Statement	Pre-Mean	Pre-Interpretation	Post-Mean	Post-Interpretation	Difference (d)
19	I (am unsure / didn't know) what my students' language goals (are / were).	1.50	Minor Concern	0.50	Not a Problem	-1.00
31	I (am unsure / didn't know) how to develop my students' pronunciation.	1.00	Minor Concern	0.00	Not a Problem	-1.00
11	My students (won't / didn't) participate in the activities I (have / had) planned.	1.25	Minor Concern	0.00	Not a Problem	-1.25
18	I (am unsure / didn't know) what I should teach my students.	1.25	Minor Concern	0.00	Not a Problem	-1.25
20	I (am unsure / didn't know) what my students' language needs are.	1.75	Concern	0.50	Not a Problem	-1.25
26	I (am unsure / didn't know) how to develop listening skills among my students.	1.50	Minor Concern	0.25	Not a Problem	-1.25
28	I (am unsure / didn't know) how to develop writing skills among my students.	1.50	Minor Concern	0.25	Not a Problem	-1.25
29	I (am unsure / didn't know) how to develop my students' understanding of grammar.	1.25	Minor Concern	0.00	Not a Problem	-1.25
30	I (am unsure / didn't know) how to develop my students' vocabulary base.	1.25	Minor Concern	0.00	Not a Problem	-1.25
22	I (am / was) unsure of the teaching style most appropriate for my students.	1.75	Concern	0.25	Not a Problem	-1.50
25	I (am unsure / didn't know) how to develop speaking skills among my students.	1.50	Minor Concern	0.00	Not a Problem	-1.50
27	I (am unsure / didn't know) how to develop reading skills among my students.	1.50	Minor Concern	0.00	Not a Problem	-1.50
32	I (am unsure / didn't know) how to help my students become better language learners.	1.75	Concern	0.25	Not a Problem	-1.50
7	I (am unsure how / was unable) to prepare effective teaching or learning resources.	2.33	Major Concern	0.33	Not a Problem	-2.00
21	I (am / was) unsure how to create lessons that effectively address my students' language needs and goals.	2.67	Major Concern	0.50	Not a Problem	-2.17

Pre-arrival interpretive key:

0.00 - 0.75	= Not a Concern
0.76 - 1.50	= Minor Concern
1.51 - 2.25	= Concern
2.26 - 3.00	= Major Concern

Post-experience interpretive key:

0.00 - 0.75	= Not a Problem
0.76 - 1.50	= Minor Problem
1.51 - 2.25	= Problem
2.26 - 3.00	= Major Problem

Table 11 draws attention to numerous salient findings. For one, it is noted that with one exception, all of the Likert-scale statements on the post-experience questionnaire were interpreted as “not a problem” ( $\bar{x} \leq 0.75$ ). Only Statement 23 (“I didn't know the expectations of the local school administration”) was interpreted as a

“minor problem” ( $\bar{x} = 1.25$ ). Also salient is the comparison between the pre-arrival and post-experience questionnaires. Of the 32 statements, only Statement 15 (“*My students [will have / had] very different levels of English proficiency*”) had a positive  $d$ -value ( $d = 0.17$ ). In other words, it was the only statement interpreted as more of a problem in hindsight than it was foreseen as a concern prior to the experience. For Statement 23 (“*I [am unsure of / didn’t know] the expectations of the local school administration*”), there was no change across the pre-arrival and post-experience questionnaires ( $d = 0.00$ ). The other 30 statements had a value of ( $d < 0$ ), suggesting a declining level of perceived need among the volunteers.

Regardless of the small sample size (only four volunteer lead teachers), the results of the quantitative analysis of the post-experience questionnaire appear as an important outlier when considered together with the data from the other research instruments. The interpretation of “not a problem” for 31 out of 32 statements on the volunteer lead teachers’ post-experience questionnaire appears inconsistent with the previously reported data collected through observations, journals, field notes, and interviews with other participants. Even more interesting, the quantitative analysis of the post-experience questionnaire appears inconsistent with the volunteer lead teachers’ own comments on the qualitatively analyzed portions of the same questionnaire. For instance, consider again these previously presented comments:

*The learning levels were quite different between students and this caused some challenges. (Carl’s post-experience questionnaire)*

*Definitely the most challenging part of this week was the lack of prep time – the inability to prepare lessons before class time. I would have liked to have all the materials the night before to look them over and plan – even taking just a bit to think about how to explain the games to the kids and think of a few different ways to play each game to make it more or less challenging depending on how the class reacts to them. (Rachel’s post-experience questionnaire)*

In light of these inconsistencies, one possibility is that there exists a problematic nature of a *problem*. Perhaps, as witnessed in the two comments above, the volunteers felt that the term *challenge* was preferable to *problem*. It may be that a *challenge* has a more positive connotation: that a *challenge* is welcome, while a *problem* is onerous. This conjecture seems reasonable, given the volunteers’ responses to the following question on the post-experience questionnaire:

Do you feel you had any needs throughout your time of volunteer service that could have been addressed more fully? If so, what were they, and how could they have been more fully addressed?

*I do, but the needs were small and I think having the challenges are good for the teacher. They helped me get better at thinking on my toes. (Carl’s post-experience questionnaire)*

*I thought it was an excellent experience and I knew that it was very important to be flexible and be willing to go with the flow since it was only one week we were in the school. It was experiential learning! (Rachel’s post-experience questionnaire)*

The responses reflect the positive light in which these volunteers retrospectively beheld their experiences despite a somewhat tacit admittance of needs. During the week, there was evidence from the reflection journals that the volunteer lead teachers had made various attempts to “problematize” – that is, challenge the *status quo* in order to give rise to something more favorable – their classrooms, as they recounted particular classroom struggles and described ways they would attempt to overcome those struggles on the following day. But, with only four “following days” on this particular volunteer teaching venture, the volunteers did not need to make a long-term or future commitment to problematizing the classroom situation. For that reason, it may be that one week of the teaching experience was welcome, not onerous; it was a *challenge*, not a *problem*.

#### 5.4 Summary of Results

Chapter Five has offered a presentation of the research findings, organized primarily by the two chief research questions. Information from all of the data collection instruments was included in this chapter as it related to the objective of answering the research questions.

The first research question has asked the following: What are the needs of short-term international volunteers relevant to facilitating English language learning in the local context? The answer to the first research question was organized into three themes: first, fulfillment of the volunteers’ living needs; second, pursuit of sound classroom practice; and third, respect of the local context. Each theme also included various subcategories which further identified the needs.

The next section of the chapter has addressed the second research question: What roles of responsibility do the various participants take on to address the needs of the short-term international volunteers? The first part of this section described the ways in which the volunteer lead teachers sought to meet their own needs both prior to arrival and throughout their stay. The second part focused on the myriad roles, together with the constraints, of the group leader in addressing the needs of the volunteers. The third part identified the roles of responsibility taken on by other participants, including the non-lead teacher volunteers, the regional participants, and the local village participants.

Finally, the chapter has engaged in an extended presentation and discussion of the quantitative results of the post-experience questionnaire. The findings from this questionnaire seem inconsistent with much of the other data, particularly when compared with the pre-arrival questionnaire and the qualitative comments on the post-experience questionnaire. It has been speculated that the volunteers preferred to consider their classroom teaching needs not as *problems*, but as *challenges* and opportunities for personal growth.