Same same but different: Distinguishing what it means to teach English as a foreign language within the context of volunteer tourism

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ABSTRACT

This work highlights a popular form of volunteer tourism in Southeast Asia — Teaching English as a Foreign Language Volunteer Tourism (TEFL VT). Given the limited literature on this niche form of tourism, the purpose of this paper was to gain a better understanding of and differentiation between TEFL VT and TEFL jobs in Thailand based on analyzing the content of position advertisements. TEFL jobs were found to be predominantly long-term paid positions located in Bangkok that preferred college-educated native English speaking Western expatriates with teaching experience, whereas TEFL VT programs were primarily short-term, outside of Bangkok, and did not require teaching experience nor formal education beyond high school. TEFL VT programs were also less restrictive than TEFL jobs with regards to who could apply, required payment, involved activities outside of teaching, and focused not solely on students but also volunteer benefits while distancing themselves from the mass tourism industry.

1. Introduction

Thailand is one of the most-visited tourist destinations in the world. In 2016, the country was highlighted by the World Tourism Organization for its second year of strong growth climbing from fifth to third place in terms of tourism receipts and from tenth to ninth position in terms of tourist arrivals (WTO, 2017). Tourism growth is expected to continue in Thailand (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2017), with sustainable forms of tourism such as volunteer tourism becoming especially popular (Thailand PRD, 2016).

The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) actively promotes volunteer tourism (TAT Newsroom, 2013) and has identified this form of tourism "as a promising future niche-market" (as cited in Clemmons, 2011). As Wearing (2001) claimed, "volunteer tourism applies to those tourists who, for various reasons, volunteer in an organized way to undertake holidays that might involve aiding or alleviating the material poverty of some groups in society, the restoration of certain environments, or research into aspects of society or environment" (p.1). Volunteer tourism has been promoted in Thailand since the devastating 2004 Tsunami (Mostafanezhad, 2016) and subsequent flooding in 2011 (TAT Newsroom, 2011) as a way to rebuild areas severely impacted by natural disasters. TAT continues to endorse volunteer tourism, and in 2013 won the Digital Innovation Asia Awards Most Impactful Campaign award for its global marketing campaign to promote volunteer tourism in Thailand (TAT, 2013).

Aside from the promotion of volunteer tourism, volunteer opportunities in Thailand are ubiquitous. Keese's (2011) review of volunteer postings in Latin America, Africa, and Asia on the website www.volunteerabroad.com found Thailand to have 298 volunteer postings, the second largest number of postings in Asia, surpassed only by 386 postings in India, the country with the most postings internationally. The only other country within Asia comparable to Thailand was Nepal which had 228 volunteer postings. The rest of the 20 countries in Asia identified by Keese had roughly 100 or less postings (e.g., China with 110, Laos with 24, Myanmar with two postings).

Despite being a popular volunteer tourism destination, literature focused specifically on this form of tourism in Thailand is limited, yet growing (e.g., Broad, 2003; Broad & Jenkins, 2008; Kontogeorgopoulos, 2017; Mostafanezhad & Kontogeorgopoulos, 2014; Proyrungroj, 2017; Rattan, Eagles, & Mair, 2012). Though the existing work on the topic in Thailand focuses on volunteer tourists' motivations, policy implications, identity formation, and a number of other topics, rarely has research focused on English language teaching—an increasingly popular means by which foreigners can visit the country and provide a service to those in pursuit of language advancement.

Teaching English as a Foreign Language Volunteer Tourism (TEFL VT) is a niche form of volunteer tourism. It is a common project category (e.g., Callanan & Thomas, 2005; Chan, 2011; Matthews, 2008;

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Palacios, 2010; Sin, 2010), yet few studies have focused specifically on this form of service. Research done by Jakubiak (2012; 2014) and Stainton (2016; 2017) focusing on TEFL VT and TEFL tourism, have been the notable exceptions. Jakubiak (2012) considered the discursive framing of English as a "magical cure-all" and the potential personal growth of TEFL VT program participants. Stainton (2017) distinguished TEFL VT from TEFL tourism mainly based on compensation, conceptualizing a TEFL tourist as "a person who travels outside of their usual environment to teach English as a foreign language, whose role shifts between tourist, educator and educatee at various points in their trip" (p.2).

The TEFL industry varies greatly throughout the world. No universal job description, benefits, or qualifications within the industry account for what Stainton (2017) calls the "grey dynamics of the global TEFL industry" (p.3). Likewise, volunteer tourism encompasses a variety of activities, motivations, destinations and other factors that make defining the practice difficult. As such, it is rather unclear what differentiates TEFL jobs from TEFL VT. This paper therefore adds to the current literature by examining the similarities and differences between these two forms of English language instruction in Thailand. Given that little research has focused on TEFL VT or how TEFL jobs in Thailand might be different from this niche form of volunteer tourism, much can be gleaned from such an exploratory comparison (Stainton, 2016). To better understand and distinguish between TEFL jobs and TEFL VT, a content analysis of online advertisements for each form of instruction was employed. Results of this study expand the research on the TEFL industry in Thailand and assist in a better understanding of TEFL VT.

2. Literature review

English language instruction in Thailand began during the reign of King Rama III (1824–1851) and was primarily conducted by Christian missionaries and tutors who taught the language to members of the royal family. English language teaching gradually migrated to the general public, and by the 1950s, foreign English language teachers were working in the country as part of foreign aid (i.e., British Council, United States Foundation). New curricula in the 1960s required students after grade four to study English and brought with it volunteer teachers from the United States, United Kingdom and Canada (Durongphan, Aksornkul, Wannawech, & Tiancharoen, 1982) (as cited in Darasawang, 2007).

English is currently the most commonly used, taught, and prestigious modern foreign language in Thailand (Luangthongkum, 2007; Wongsothorn, 2004). As such, English language learning exists at varying degrees within all levels of Thai education. Students can choose to attend an international school where English is used as the mode of instruction, or enter the Thai school system and be exposed to English as part of the national curriculum or a bilingual English program. Both the bilingual English Program (EP) and Mini English Program (MEP) provide either dual language instruction or core subjects taught with English as the medium of instruction, and typically charge additional fees which are used to hire foreign English language teachers (Punthumasen, 2007).

2.1. Barriers to English language education

Despite the growing demand among individuals in Thailand to learn English, an insufficient number of English language teachers exist (OECD/UNESCO, 2016; Punthumasen, 2007; Wongsothorn, 2004). This lack of teachers can be attributed, at least in part, to low wages (Luangthongkum, 2007). Thai residents with proficient English skills often pursue more lucrative careers working in the private sector or tourism industry (Dhanasobhon, 2006; Mackenzie, 2002, pp. 59–67). Qualified foreign English language teachers also tend to avoid teaching in Thailand because, despite making more than their Thai counterparts (Punthumasen, 2007), the pay is relatively low when compared to other

countries. In 2006, the difficulty recruiting teachers became obvious when the Thai government put forth an effort to recruit 10,000 foreign English language teachers for primary and secondary schools. Requiring no qualifications outside of being a "native English speaker," this effort was unsuccessful and attracted only eleven applications (Kirkpatrick, 2010).

The teacher shortage has resulted in a preponderance of unqualified English language teachers in Thailand (Atagi, 2011). Most Thai English language teachers are out-of-field with less than 20% having degrees related to English (Punthumasen, 2007). These teachers often lack English proficiency, training and the self-confidence to teach the language, and must balance between multiple roles, limited time, and a large work load (Ho, 2002; Nunan, 2003; Punthumasen, 2007). Likewise, the demand for those with competent English skills has resulted in hiring foreigners from outside of the TEFL field (Methanonpphakhun & Deocampo, 2016; Punthumasen, 2007).

Ho (2002) sums up the problem related to English language teaching throughout Southeast Asia as a quantitative versus qualitative dilemma: "On the one hand, these countries face a dire shortage of teachers of English and on the other, those currently teaching the language would need to improve qualitatively" (p.19). The lack of qualified teachers, along with little opportunity to practice English outside of the classroom have contributed to Thai students historically scoring low on English proficiency exams (EF Education First, 2018; Punthumasen, 2007). While the Thai government has made significant efforts to curtail the current problem by reforming education policy, policies reflected within public schools are widely believed to have been unsuccessful (Nunan, 2003). Overall, Luangthongkum (2007) remarks that, "English language teaching and learning in Thailand may be regarded as a failure" (p.190). The shortage of qualified teachers is likely to continue to delay efforts to increase English fluency in the country and requires attention as Thailand searches for a long-term solution to the issue of overall demand and supply of teachers for critical subjects such as English (Atagi, 2011; Fernquest, 2017).

2.2. Volunteer tourism

One way individuals in the West have responded to the demand for English language teachers in Thailand is through volunteer tourism. Volunteer tourism is an alternative, niche, or sustainable form of tourism (Callanan & Thomas, 2005; McIntosh & Zahra, 2007; Wearing, 2001). Early research on volunteer tourism focused on defining the practice, addressing issues related to volunteer motivation, and volunteer experience. Recent directions in volunteer tourism research have begun to focus on examining the impact of service on members in host communities and transition from what Wearing and McGehee (2013) refer to as advocacy-based research to emphasizing a more cautionary platform.

This study adds to the current trend in volunteer tourism research by considering the impact of TEFL VT (Lupoli, Morse, Bailey, & Schelhas, 2014; Taplin, Dredge, & Scherrer, 2014). While a preponderance of work has focused on volunteer tourist motivations and the like (see Guttentag, 2015; McGehee, 2014), research has neglected to focus on certain specialized forms of volunteer tourism. Such specificity is needed to explore and expand our understanding of tourism activities such as TEFL VT.

2.3. Teaching English as a foreign Language Volunteer tourism

A plethora of service activities are plausible under the umbrella of volunteer tourism. In the popular tourism guide, *Volunteer Vacations: Short-Term Adventures That Will Benefit You and Others* (now in its 11th edition), McMillon, Cutchins, and Geissinger (2012) organize volunteer tourism into several categories namely:

Agriculture, community development, construction, education,

historic preservation, human rights, medical/health, natural con-
servation, political action, and social justice.

One form of education volunteer tourism is English-language vo-
luntourism or Teaching English as a Foreign Language Volunteer
Tourism (TEFL VT), which Jakubiak (2012) defines, "As a form of vo-
lunteer tourism in which native speakers of prestige-variety, or inner-
core English, teach language lessons in the Global South on a short-term
basis" (p.437). In this definition, Jakubiak notes the minimal required
participation of volunteers and remarks that, "Neither formal educator
credentials nor familiarity with language pedagogy are generally re-
quired" (p.437). Jakubiak's conception of TEFL VT is adopted for this
study.

Though the research focusing on TEFL VT is growing, it is currently
in a developing stage (highlighted by the fact that a preponderance of
this work is either conceptual or qualitative in nature) with two main
researchers leading the charge (see Jakubiak, 2012; 2014; Stainton,
2016; 2017). In a rather critical assessment of TEFL VT, Jakubiak
(2012) purports that the niche form of volunteer tourism is constructed
as an "altruistic practice" (based on interviewees' responses) given that
English is conceived of as a "magical cure-all." In essence, participants
perceive their work to be powerful; to be a developmental change agent
within the destinations they volunteer. Focusing on volunteer tourists
in Costa Rica, Jakubiak (2014) highlighted how many are critical of
their TEFL experience, calling into question the "pedagogical founda-
tions on which English language voluntourism is based" (p. 103). Such
work begs the questions of what role do these volunteer tourists play in
contributing to development and do job requirements/qualifications
factor into this critical view of the TEFL volunteer tourists' experience?

Stainton (2016; 2017), in her conceptual work, coined the term
"TEFL tourism," distinguishing between a volunteer and tourist teacher.
Stainton (2016) considered the use of blogs by TEFL tourists in Thai-
land to explain the phenomenon across four key themes: tourism, ca-
maraderie, teaching duties, and education. Though Stainton (2016)
mentions the latter themes (i.e., teaching duties and education), little
focus is paid in considering these aspects as qualification standards
among the tourists. Furthermore, what Stainton (2016) fails to consider
in not defining tourism is how such tourism posts may be similar or
dissimilar to TEFL teachers who are not tourists. Stainton (2017) of-
fered an operational definition and typology of TEFL tourists distin-
guishing TEFL tourism as a niche form that encompasses notions of both
education and tourism and draws parallels with associated tourism
forms including volunteer, education and philanthropy. Stainton
(2017) designates TEFL teachers as tourists based on their movement
from their usual place of residence to their TEFL destination, temporary
residency, frequent in-country relocation, and amount of travel breaks
both within and outside of their TEFL country. TEFL tourism is differ-
entiated from TEFL VT based on remuneration, packaged products,
characteristics and motivations.

Little doubt exists that TEFL VT has the potential to help improve
the English fluency of individuals in Thailand. With that said however,
to gain a better understanding of TEFL VT, it must first be compared to
TEFL jobs. Only at that time will we begin to understand more about
this niche form of volunteer tourism and determine what it consists of
by considering what it is not (i.e., employment), so that greater strides
can be made in advancing research on TEFL VT within Thailand and
beyond.

3. Methodology

This study was exploratory in nature given the limited research
within the literature concerning TEFL VT. Content analysis was em-
ployed as an analytic method given its flexibility. Defined broadly as
"any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically
identifying specified characteristics of messages" (Holsti, 1969, p. 14),
content analysis allowed for themes to be generated from website

content. Data analysis was conducted by initially transferring the text
from TEFL VT and TEFL job advertisements into a spreadsheet as a
means for further analysis. Key words and phrases from this content
(e.g., American, British, and Canadian) were then grouped according to
their frequency into categories such as "nationality requirements."
Subsequent reviews of this data were conducted to determine dominant
themes (e.g., qualifications). These themes were compared to gain a
better understanding of TEFL VT and TEFL jobs in Thailand.

Content analysis is commonly used to analyze textual data (Julien,
2008). Previous volunteer tourism studies have used this methodology
either as the primary research method or in a mixed-methods approach
(e.g., Brown, 2005; Chen & Chen, 2011; Coghlan, 2006; Coghlan, 2007;
McIntosh & Zahra, 2007; Smith & Font, 2014; Wilkinson, McCool, &
Bois, 2014). Smith and Font (2014), for example, used content analysis
to better understand volunteer tourism websites. A similar approach
has also been utilized to look at job postings in fields such as library and
information studies (e.g., Choi & Rasmussen, 2009; Wu & Li, 2008).

This study used content analysis to examine and compare TEFL VT
and TEFL job advertisements. The distinction between these two forms
of English language instruction in Thailand was made along two axes:
how they were defined by Thai law and their hosting website. Tourists
from 48 countries (e.g., US, UK) can enter Thailand visa exempt and be
eligible to stay in the country for a maximum of 30 days (for tourism
purposes only). To volunteer legally in Thailand, foreigners need a non-
immigrant "O" visa. For employment, a work visa and work permit are
required (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2017). It is therefore assumed
those undertaking the paid or voluntary positions in this study would
do so legally.

3.1. TEFL jobs

TEFL job advertisements were drawn from www.ajarn.com ("ajarn"
means teacher in Thai). This website is a top search result for "teach
English in Thailand" on the search engine Google and considered, "One
of the best all-around sources of information about teaching in
Thailand" (Griffith, 2009, p. 452). The website is well-known within
the Thai TEFL community (Grubbs, Jantarach, & Kettem, 2010;
Methitham, 2011) and self-proclaimed as "Thailand's number one TEFL
site" (Ajarn.com, 2017a).

Postings were selected from the "featured jobs" section on the
website. This section is highlighted on the front page of the website's
employment page and displayed in several other locations on the
website to increase its potential for broad viewership. Featured jobs are
given priority over other job postings on the website because they are
paid. That employers paid to have their jobs listed on the website gives
these advertisements credibility as legitimate job postings. Companies
that pay to have their listings in this section are featured as a clickable
icon. Clicking on an employer's job advertisement icon prompts a pop-
up window with a summary of the job and other pertinent information
(i.e., salary, location).

Of the 48 featured jobs, 16 were excluded from the sample either
because they were double postings, had no job information, or were not
full-time English language teaching positions (e.g., music teacher, Thai
language teacher). This resulted in 32 job advertisements being re-
corded on April 3, 2017. Of the 32 job advertisements chosen, some
companies were hiring for several positions, while others had multiple
postings. Advertisements were chosen if they had at least one English
language teaching position and if different postings from the same
employer were for different jobs. Advertisements came from recruiters
and both public/private schools and were, on average, approximately
300 words each. To apply for the positions, 26 employers required a
resume. The remaining six indicated that applicants should make initial
contact via email, www.ajarn.com, or through their website. Additional
material requested by employers included 16 wanting a recent photo,
15 requiring copies of formal documents (i.e., passport, transcripts,
teaching certificate), nine needing a cover letter, two needing a

criminal record check, and two calling for applicants to submit a video introduction.

3.2. TEFL VT

TEFL VT advertisements were drawn from www.goabroad.com. GoAbroad is a database for international experiences with over 18,626 international programs (GoAbroad.com, 2017). The website is affiliated with several international organizations including the International Volunteer Programs Association (IVPA) which requires its members to adhere to a set of quality standards. GoAbroad has been cited in several studies on volunteer tourism (e.g., Steele, Dredge, & Scherrer, 2017; Tiessen, 2017; Wilkinson et al., 2014) and is the top organic Google search result for "volunteer abroad" out of approximately 8,070,000 search results.

Selecting "volunteer abroad" on GoAbroad's website and choosing Thailand (Choose a Country), teaching English (Choose a Cause), with no duration resulted in 58 organizations offering 129 programs. Programs were selected from this initial search result if they were specific to teaching English in Thailand and verified by GoAbroad. GoAbroad's verification system requires at the very least, that organizations are registered businesses, have responded to test email inquiries, and have received at least one participant review (GoAbroad.com, 2017). Similar to paid advertisements on www.ajarn.com, this system ensures a level of program credibility. A total of 45 programs were selected based on these criteria.

Clicking on each of the 45 volunteer program advertisements brings the user to a project description page which includes a summary of the project and key program information (i.e., cost, duration). Each description was roughly 450 words and was collected on July 31, 2017. In order to apply for these TEFL VT positions, 41 programs required an online and/or written application. Other necessary application documents included 14 programs requiring a resume, 13 requesting a phone/video interview, and nine wanting a reference letter.

4. Findings

Data from the 32 TEFL job and 45 TEFL VT advertisements were grouped into three primary themes: description, qualifications, and benefits. These themes and their sub-themes are summarized in Table 1 and discussed below.

4.1. Description: location

Twenty TEFL jobs were located in Thailand's capital Bangkok. Other positions were primarily located in central provinces within the vicinity of Bangkok and included: three in Pathum Thani, two in Nonthaburi, and one posting each in Ayutthaya, Samut Prakan, and Ratchaburi. Chiang Mai, the largest city in Northern Thailand, had two postings and was the only job location outside of Central Thailand other than one position in the Eastern province Chon Buri and one advertisement for teaching jobs in Central, North and Northeast (Isaan) Thailand (See

Table 1
Resulting themes and sub-themes from content analysis.

Theme	Sub-theme	TEFL Jobs	TEFL VT
Description	Location	Bangkok	Outside of Bangkok
	Duration	Long-term	Short-term
	Promotion	Not Tourism	Not Mass Tourism
Qualifications	Education	Undergraduate Degree	High School Diploma
	Experience	Experience Required	Experience Acquired
	Nationality	Restricted	Unrestricted
Benefits	Payment	Payee	Payer
	Focus	Exclusive to Teaching	Inclusive of Teaching
	Benefactor	Student	Student/Volunteer

Fig. 1). The cluster of TEFL jobs around Bangkok is due to several factors such as the city's appeal, individual/institutional wealth, and the region's relatively high standard of education compared to other parts of the country.

Seventeen TEFL VT projects were situated along the Thai coast, thirteen projects were located in Isaan, and eight were in Northern Thailand. Only two projects took place in Bangkok, one in the country's ancient capital Ayutthaya, and four were located in a mixture of the above locations. TEFL VT projects take place in the country's most impoverished areas and in doing so, reinforce the notion of Thailand as poor, underdeveloped, and in need of volunteers. Additionally, project locations reflect a constructed imagination of Thailand as a tourist destination where Isaan (the agricultural region of Thailand) was described by TEFL VT programs as picturesque (Volunteering Journeys), islands in the South as stunning (IkoPoran Volunteer Abroad), and towns/villages in the country's Northern region (home to varies ethnic "hill tribe" minority groups) as surrounded by beautiful natural landscapes and lush mountains (Andaman Discoveries).

4.2. Description: duration

TEFL job advertisements did not list employment length implying that employers were looking for long-term teachers. According to Ajarn.com's Newbie Guide, while it may be possible to find a short-term teaching position, generally schools require at least a one-year commitment (Ajarn.com, 2017b). Contracts are often renewable and in this study, employers used incentives to positively influence teacher retention and dissuade turnover (i.e., contract completion bonuses, annual salary increases). These incentives curtail instances of foreign teachers breaking their contracts for better opportunities and leaving a school understaffed and in search for a last-minute replacement (Punthumasen, 2007).

TEFL VT programs did not require the same level of commitment. The average placement length (offered by 38 programs) lasted two to four weeks. Additional placement lengths included 18 programs offering three to six month placements and 16 programs offering one to two week placements. Thirty programs were open to applicants throughout the year or did not list enrollment times, 10 operated only during the Thai school year, three took place in July (the month data were collected), and two operated only during the summer. Short-term placements fit the needs of volunteer tourists who typically serve during a school break or gap year (Mostafanezhad, 2016).

4.3. Description: promotion

A high demand for native English speaking teachers and tight restrictions on other forms of employment, make teaching English a practical way for Westerns to obtain the necessary legal requirements to live and work in Thailand long-term. As evidenced in this research, there is a large concentration of TEFL jobs in Bangkok, which is one of the world's most popular international travel destinations (Mastercard, 2016; 2017). Despite Bangkok's desirability as a tourist destination, any reference to tourism within TEFL job advertisements was secondary. Instead, Bangkok's convenience as a modern city was emphasized.

As a cosmopolitan city, Bangkok affords luxuries unavailable in other parts of Thailand or much of Southeast Asia (e.g., high-rise condos, modern hospitalities, international restaurants). Comforts, such as the above-ground Bangkok Mass Transit System (BTS) and the below-ground Metropolitan Rapid Transit (MRT), were used by Bangkok schools to incentivize potential applicants. Modulo Language School commented that they were "easily accessible by MRT and BTS; " Ideal English Academy advertised that, "The school is located within walking distance from Queen Sirikit or Khlong Toei MRT stations in the heart of Bangkok metropolis; " and Fun Language International wrote, "Our office location is 5 min from the BTS line (BTS Ari) allowing for convenience when living in most parts of Bangkok."
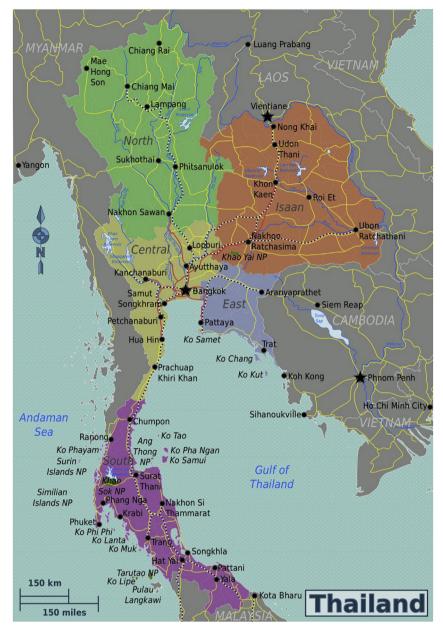
Fig. 1. Thailand regions. By globe-trotter (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Thailand_regions_map.png).

Schools wanted applicants already living in Thailand. TeachinThailand stated, "Candidates who are currently in Bangkok/ Thailand will be contacted by the school" and the Thai Christian School, Varee Chiangmai School, Interkids Bilingual School, and The Knowledge all required in-person interviews. Employers also indicated their preference for applicants living in Thailand indirectly. The American School of Bangkok, for example, required a local phone number for an initial interview and EP Plus Learning asked for a "Copy of passport and last visa page." Employers want applicants already in Thailand to allow for last-minute hiring, to gain an impression of them through an in-person meeting, and to potentially observe a teaching demonstration. Individuals already in Thailand are also more likely familiar with the country's teaching climate and less likely to pester employers with questions. Further, requiring applicants are already in Thailand dissuades individuals who want to "teach 'n travel" and those outside of Thailand who sign a contract, but never follow through. When the question of why so many job advertisements required applicants to be in Thailand was posted to the over 50,000 member Facebook group Teaching Jobs in Thailand consisting of a variety of

stakeholders in Thai education, one teacher summarized, "When I buy a product I wanna know if 1) is it in stock and available now 2) I can see the merchandise before making my investment."

The TEFL VT organizations surveyed in this study advertised exclusively to individuals outside of Thailand and promoted the country as a fun, comfortable and safe tourist destination. The Mirror Foundation, for example, wrote "Have fun volunteering for 2–12 weeks in Chiang Rai." In stark contrast to TEFL jobs that stressed modern comfort, TEFL VT organizations like Friends for Asia, noted their distance from these conveniences citing, "Volunteers on this project are a world away from the expat hangouts, international restaurants and Internet cafés of downtown Chiang Mai." Fun also existed outside of volunteering. Love Volunteer indicated under the header "Free Time" that, "We realize that everyone needs a break and encourage our volunteers to have a look around where and when possible. All you need to do is let us know what you want to do and we will do our very best to make it happen for you!" This emphasis on volunteer fun ensures a pleasurable tourism experience to individuals visiting Thailand.

A focus on volunteer comfort and safety/support was another

indicator of leisure. TEFL VT programs reassured volunteers that they would be comfortable and safe while assisting individuals in under-privileged communities. Both Love volunteers and Volunthai advertised comfortable accommodation, breakfast, and camaraderie. Working Abroad Projects elaborated:

> Indeed, one reason this programme has been so successful is because the Thais take such good care of their guests. Though you will be teaching very poor students in the most remote provinces of Thailand the homestays are quite comfortable. You will get a Western style house, proper bed, bathroom, and three fine Thai meals daily.

Twenty programs cited providing support compared to only one TEFL job. International Volunteer HQ highlighted their "Safety First" policy citing, "You can feel confident that you are placed with trust-worthy institutions, organizations and families that have been screened by our local teams." In addition to holding volunteer safety as their "top priority," Love Volunteers advertised their support stating, "With dedicated in-country teams, you know you will have 24/7 support right there when you need it - guaranteed! From questions to hospital trips, we will ensure you are supported throughout your placement." TEFL VT fees help to further ensure participants are cared for, covering a range of services including airport pickup, orientation, transportation, and meals (Keese, 2011).

While TEFL VT organizations marketed their projects to tourists, they sought to distance themselves from mass tourism. The Mirror Foundation stated, "*It is important to know* [emphasis added] that The Mirror Foundation is a working organization, not a holiday resort." Love Volunteers similarly dissociated themselves with the tourism industry stating, "By becoming a Love Volunteer you are saying to the world that you are a REAL volunteer and your focus is on supporting people and communities in need. You're not just a tourist and your goals include much more than selfies and hangovers." This distinction between mass tourism as potentially hurting a country and volunteer tourism as benefiting a country has been cited previously (e.g., Borland & Adams, 2013; Mostafanezhad, 2016).

4.4. Qualifications: education

TEFL job advertisements required applicants possess an under-graduate degree or higher related to English language teaching. This finding reflects Thai law which mandates foreign teachers must have a Bachelor's degree to teach English. If applicants have an unrelated undergraduate degree, it is required that they obtain a professional certification or training in accordance with the professional standards of the Teachers' Council of Thailand (Khurusapha, 2017).

TEFL VT programs required fewer credentials. Seven programs required a high school diploma and 27 had an age restriction. This re-striction excluded children and/or the elderly and preferred volunteers over the age of 18. One program from Pod Volunteer, "Under 18s Teaching English Expedition to Thailand," had an age range of 16–17. This age requirement reflects the average age (typically 18–25 years old) of volunteer tourists (Wearing, 2001), and likely translates into the majority of TEFL VT participants having received a high school di-ploma.

4.5. Qualifications: experience

Twenty-three employers wanted applicants with (typically) one to two years of teaching experience. A year of teaching experience is the minimum requirement for foreign teachers to receive a teaching license in Thailand (Khurusapha, 2017). The highest paying school required three to five years of teaching experience. Employers also requested candidates have specific curriculum experience (e.g., British National Curriculum), pedagogical experience (e.g., Reggio Emilia approach), as well as experience teaching specific age groups (e.g., young learners).

For TEFL VT, no program required any experience teaching. Confirming Jakubiak (2012), not only were formal educator credentials and familiarity with language pedagogy not required, TEFL VT was advertised as an avenue to acquire experience. For example, Projects Abroad advertised, "With Projects Abroad you can gain practical work experience volunteering as an English teacher in Thailand without the need for a certification or previous teaching experience." In lieu of teaching experience, TEFL VT programs preferenced certain personality traits such as being adaptable, outgoing, and creative.

4.6. Qualifications: nationality

Being a native English speaking (NES) applicant was the most sig-nificant qualification for TEFL jobs in Thailand and was closely linked to nationality. Hampton International Pre-School explicitly wrote "Native English Speaker only" and The Knowledge noted, "Unfortunately we are unable to accept applications from non-native English speakers." Other schools, like Ideal English Academy, listed specific nationality requirements: "At this time we are only accepting Native Speakers of English from UK, Ireland, USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa." For the two advertisements where nationality was not mentioned, it was likely assumed applicants would be from countries where English is the primary language.

Although more research is needed on why the demand for NES teachers exists in Thailand, this preference is often associated with the assumption that such individuals are better equipped to teach English and the target culture (i.e., Western culture). Individuals from certain (i.e., Western) countries and with a specific appearance (i.e., fair skin) are also more attractive to schools (Methitham, 2011) and sometimes used to recruit potential students. The nationality preference also re-flects current polices established through the Teachers and Educational Personnel Council Act which designates teachers from certain countries as NES and requires all others to take a language proficiency test (Khurusapha, 2017).

No TEFL VT program had a nationality requirement. While 10 re-quested NES participants, 14 favored English proficiency. This finding was distinct from TEFL jobs which overwhelmingly preferred NES teachers. It also speaks to the demographic most likely to participate in volunteer tourism. While job opportunities in Thailand attract non-native English speakers from neighboring countries (Novio, 2012), the volunteers drawn to Thailand are often from Western English speaking countries (Mostafanezhad, 2016).

4.7. Benefits: payment

TEFL teacher salaries ranged between 15,000–100,000 baht ($480-$3202) per month, with 14 employers paying 40,000 baht per month ($1280). Six employers paid 50,000 baht ($1601), five paid 30,000 baht ($960), two paid 35,000 baht ($1120), and one paid 25,000 baht ($800) per month. The highest paying job had a salary of 100,000 baht ($3202) per month and was an administrative position at a private school, while the three lowest paying jobs were for pre-kindergarten/kindergarten teachers and paid 15,000 baht ($480) per month.

Fringe benefits were also included. Nineteen employers assisted with applying for or the payment of a visa/work permit, 15 provided health insurance, 11 paid for vacation/sick days, four assisted with short-term lodging/assistance finding accommodations, and one offered 24/7 assistance. Four employers included the financial benefit of a housing allowance, four others included free school meals, and one job advertisement mentioned the possibility of additional paid work. Employers also offered job-related benefits. Eight offered professional development training, five provided readymade teaching curriculum, two offered workplace transport, two others provided a Thai teaching assistant, one offered to pay 50% for a teaching certificate and another offered to pay for one in full.

Being a NES teacher played a significant role not just for qualifying

as an English language teacher, but also when considering salary. For example, The American English Language School stated that "Nationality and/or physical appearance is irrelevant" and then directly contradicted this statement elaborating that "NES (Native English Speaker) applicants will receive preference over NNES (Non-native English Speaker) applicants" and "NES teachers will start from between 40,000–60,000 baht a month, depending on qualifications and experience. NNES teachers will start from between 16,000–35,000 baht a month, depending on qualifications and experience."

There was also a preference among the four lowest paying jobs for Filipino teachers. Filipino teachers, considered non-native English speakers in Thailand, were paid a similar salary to Thai English language teachers for the same job as a NES teacher. Onepasa Language School, for example, paid NES teachers between 30,000–35,000 baht per month ($960-$1120) to teach kindergarten in Pathumtani, while Filipino teachers were paid between 15,000–20,000 baht per month ($480-$640). This finding reflects the advice given by Kirkpatrick (2012), who suggested employing qualified Filipino teachers at a Thai salary to help improve the standard of English in Thailand. It also evidences a degree of discrimination and prejudice in the Thai TEFL industry against foreign non-native English speaking teachers.

With regards to payment, a distinguishing factor between TEFL VT and the TEFL jobs is that individuals typically pay to volunteer (Broad & Jenkins, 2008; Keese, 2011; Wearing, 2001). TEFL VT programs in this study averaged $950 for one to two weeks of volunteer work. Only one TEFL VT program was advertised as a "Free Teaching Placement." Added expenses for volunteers include flights and insurance as well as extra program costs such as staying additional weeks and registration fees. Friends For Asia's program, for example, started at $799 for a two week placement with each additional week costing $119 and International Volunteer HQ required a $299 registration fee. Fees covered a range of services and amenities previously noted by Keese (2011), such as accommodation, on-going support, meals, airport assistance, and an orientation/training.

4.8. Benefits: focus

While TEFL jobs were exclusive to teaching and did not include activities outside of this role, TEFL VT advertisements were inclusive of teaching. The original search result of 129 programs for "teaching English" in "Thailand" on www.goabroad.com included 84 programs that did not focus on English language teaching or included teaching in addition to several other activities. This has previously been pointed out by Proyrungroj (2017), whose research on orphan volunteer tourism in Thailand found teaching English to be one of many activities provided by volunteers, which also included playing with children, cleaning, and cooking.

For the 45 selected TEFL VT programs, the amount of dedicated teaching done by volunteers was questionable. Love Volunteers, for example, explained, "The role of a teaching English volunteer can be varied as it takes into account the needs of the school, the time of year, as well as the volunteers' comfort level." Confirming Jakubiak (2012), nearly all programs offered cultural/recreational activities and many operated only on certain days. Projects International Language Programs advertised:

> A large part of our program is making sure you have the time to really see the new country you're living in. Your group is free to travel to nearby areas on any weekend and there are also vacations spread throughout the semester allowing you travel throughout Thailand and neighboring countries.

For these programs, teaching English happened alongside traditional tourism.

4.9. Benefits: benefactor

English language teachers benefit students and the schools in which they are employed through their work. The tourism component of TEFL VT, however, necessities a dual focus on student and volunteer benefits. For the recipients of TEFL VT, learning to communicate in English was touted as a pathway to broader horizons. Projects Abroad explained, "Speaking English is now a route to better jobs and by volunteering as an English teacher in Thailand, you can help to improve your students' future prospects." International Language Programs cited, "By teaching them English using an easy-to-learn, successful method, you open doors for them for better education, jobs, and other opportunities."

TEFL VT programs also advertised volunteer benefits. Opportunities for travel and sightseeing were common. International Volunteer HQ advertised "Epic Weekend Adventures," Working Abroad Projects provided "weekend excursions," and Teach English: ESL stated that their projects were, "An opportunity to explore Thailand!" Meeting people and developing cross-cultural friendships was another benefit. Both Frontier and International Volunteer HQ cited the opportunity to make "lifelong friends," IkoPoran Volunteer Abroad labeled these friendships "unforgettable," and Love Volunteers listed "friendship" as, "one of the true benefits of volunteering." The opportunity to learn was also advertised. Friends for Asia wrote:

> It is important to the school administration that volunteers aid in English education at the school, but also that volunteers receive a rich experience about Thailand, Thai culture and Buddhism during their service. For this reason, be prepared to learn as much as you teach.

This emphasis on cultural learning was common and included the history, language, and religion of Thailand as well as other easily packaged (and sometimes sold) activities such as Thai cooking, dancing, silk weaving and rice farming. Teach English: ESL in fact required that volunteers, "Must have an interest in learning about Thai culture." Learning also centered on gaining new skills and self-development. International Volunteer Services wrote, "Develop your initiative, teaching skills and creativity," while Frontier advertised, "Learn how to teach English as a foreign language!" This focus on experiential learning, developing skills, and acquiring experience that could potentially transition into a career is likely linked to the fact that volunteer tourists are often college-aged (Palacios, 2010). International Language Programs spoke specifically to this demographic citing, "A semester abroad should enhance your education and shouldn't put you behind in school!" These TEFL VT programs therefore focused not solely on the teaching done by volunteers, but also on their learning and enjoyment.

In addition to the promotion of TEFL VT as "not mass tourism," organizations differentiated themselves through their stated benefits, which speak to the various motivations that drive volunteer tourism (e.g., developing interpersonal relationships, skills development). However, in doing so organizations may have exaggerated the impact on volunteers. For volunteers, TEFL VT was labeled as a "truly fulfilling experience!" (Twin Work & Volunteer); a "life-changing journey" (Volunteering Journeys) where individuals can have "an experience that will last a lifetime" (Geovisions). Love Volunteers added that, "Your contribution with LV will be real and measurable. You will change lives, and one of them will be your own!" Benefits encompassed varies essentialized elements of Thai culture that could be learned, discovered, and experienced. People were framed as friendly/underdeveloped (i.e., monks, hill tribe children, ethnic minority groups), the culture ancient/traditional (i.e., riding an elephant, traditional Thai dance, silk weaving), and the land rural/"natural" (i.e., scenic beaches, rice fields). This risks the "real" Thailand becoming a caricature of the actual country segmented from certain realities of the current day and set apart from the typical experience a tourist may have.

TEFL VT programs also likely overstated the importance of English, and the impact of volunteers. English was described by International Language Programs as an "essential gift," and Bamboo explained, "By

teaching these kids even basic English skills, they will have a better and brighter future; guaranteed!" It is through English that both Pod Volunteer and Volunteering Journeys discussed volunteers' ability to help "break the poverty cycle." As elicited by Friends for Asia and Love Volunteers, this impact is made with no special skills: "Regardless of your teaching background, your mere presence in this public school gives students and faculty the chance to take their English skills out of the textbook and put them to work in the real world."

The exaggerated claims made by TEFL VT organizations position volunteers in an expert role similar to the one bestowed to unqualified NES teachers in the TEFL industry. The "expert" label can lead to unequal power relations and discomfort with its associated responsibilities, especially if volunteers lack the qualifications, skills, and/or experience to successfully fulfill the expectations placed on them (Palacios, 2010). Pod Volunteer, for example, expected volunteers to "plan and deliver good quality lessons," while downplaying any hesitation had by volunteers with no teaching experience and/or questionable language skills, stating, "Volunteers often worry that their English may not be good enough or that they don't know how to be a teacher. This is not a problem." A similar group of volunteers trained local teachers and helped them to "develop professionally" through Volunteering Journeys Thailand. When inexperienced volunteers are inappropriately labeled as expert teachers or language experts this can perpetuate a neo-colonial construction of western superiority (Brown & Hall, 2008; Raymond & Hall, 2008). This is further emphasized in the promotion of TEFL VT when volunteers who are framed as developed, modern, and urban are juxtaposed against local people who are depicted as underdeveloped, traditional, and rural.

5. Conclusion

The tourist demand for Thailand as a destination continues to grow, as does the desire among Thai residents to learn English (Mostafanezhad, 2016). As such, individuals are attracted to Thailand to fulfill their own travel desires while aiding in the teaching of English — either as a job or volunteer. The purpose of this paper was to gain a better understanding of and differentiation between these two forms of English language instruction. In doing so, the paper contributes to the limited literature on TEFL VT by distinguishing what it means to teach English as a foreign language within the context of volunteer tourism.

TEFL jobs in Thailand were found to be long-term paid positions restricted to college-educated NES individuals with teaching experience. They were located in Bangkok, exclusive to teaching, and primarily benefited students. In contrast, TEFL VT programs were located outside of Bangkok, short-term, required payment, and were generally unrestricted in regards to who could apply. Further, they did not require teaching experience nor a degree, included activities outside of teaching, and benefited both students and the volunteer. Lastly, while TEFL employers made an effort to dissuade tourists from applying to their positions, TEFL VT organizations promoted themselves to this group while simultaneously distancing themselves from the mass tourism industry.

This study suggests that some accomplishments have been made toward improving the quality of employed TEFL teachers in Thailand. These teachers contribute to Bangkok schools having a higher student-teacher ratio, more qualified/experienced teachers and a significantly greater learning standard compared to other parts of Thailand (especially rural areas) (World Bank, 2015). The finding that an undergraduate degree and teaching experience are required by most employers may also discourage individuals with the intention to use English language teaching for the purpose of earning an income to fund their travels (Methanonpphakhun & Deocampo, 2016). It is unknown, however, as to whether these requirements result in who is actually hired. The emphasis on NES teachers found in this study, rather than teaching qualifications has been acknowledged and problematized within the TEFL industry (see Phillipson, 1992) and likely results in

many teachers in Thailand being out-of-field.

More research is needed on the experience of Filipinos and other foreign non-native English speakers in Thailand. While the frequency of discrimination and prejudice experienced by this group during the job application process is well documented (e.g., Farrell, 2015), a limited literature exists addressing this issue within Thailand or the TEFL industry overall (Kubota & Lin, 2006). As evidenced in this study, a prejudice exists among Thai schools, students, and parents that places NES teachers with fair skin on the top of a racial hierarchy based on the belief that only they can possess a proper understanding of English (Amin, 1997; Methanonpphakhun & Deocampo, 2016; Phothongsunan & Suwanarak, 2008). Given a pseudo-celebrity status, these teachers are used to enhance a school's reputation and to attract students (Methanonpphakhun & Deocampo, 2016; Stainton, 2016). Regardless of their experience, knowledge and/or teaching ability, these teachers often receive a higher salary compared to their Thai colleagues or other non-native English speakers (such as Filipinos) who have entered the TEFL industry in Thailand in response to the prevalence of jobs and the government's efforts toward attracting more teachers to the country (Methanonpphakhun & Deocampo, 2016; Novio, 2012; Phothongsunan & Suwanarak, 2008; Punthumasen, 2007).

TEFL VT has responded to the quantitative dilemma addressed by Ho (2002). Volunteers provide an avenue for students to practice their English skills and contribute financially to the communities in which they are placed. Consequently, the income generated from volunteers incentivizes organizations to prioritize the quantity of teachers recruited over teacher quality. TEFL VT has seemingly inherited the "blanket-like employment of unqualified and unvetted native speakers" (Kirkpatrick, 2010, p. 17) traditionally found in the Thai TEFL industry. To some degree, paid TEFL teachers can be assessed by the Thai government or potential employers. TEFL VT seeks additional challenges as mention of obtaining a visa was mostly absent from advertisements, likely pointing to a majority of TEFL VT programs operating illegally. A great deal of responsibility is therefore on the shoulders of TEFL VT programs who often work within disadvantaged communities. As this form of volunteer tourism continues to develop, it is critical that tourism agencies work toward recruiting qualified volunteers and promote viable training options.

Due to the qualitative nature of the study, findings from this work may be difficult to generalize to other settings; however, they speak specifically to the comparison between two forms of English language instruction in Thailand. Consequently, one limitation of this study is that only two databases were used to collect advertisements. Future research would benefit from comparing the findings of this study with other websites that advertise TEFL opportunities. Additional qualitative research measuring the effect of TEFL VT in Thailand would also be helpful toward determining the influence of this phenomenon. Though McGehee and Andereck (2009) measured the impact of volunteer tourism in general on communities, qualitative data to develop particular items concerning TEFL VT would help inform future quantitative research. In keeping with this future line of research, subsequent work should consider collecting qualitative primary data through interviews with both employed TEFL teachers and volunteer tourists. Such work will serve to further triangulate current findings differentiating between position descriptions, qualifications, and benefits. Additionally, given the historical and current practice of English language teaching being conducted by missionaries in Thailand, it may be worthwhile to consider whether secular versus non-secular work/volunteering is further differentiated.

TEFL jobs and TEFL VT are, to echo the popular Thai adage, "same same but different." At first glance, both forms of English language teaching appear similar, but as evidenced in this study, distinctions related to position description, qualifications, and benefits are present. Following additional qualitative inquiry concerning TEFL VT (which serves to address the "what" and "how" behind this form of tourism), subsequent quantitative research should be undertaken to examine

particular relationships between phenomena for receiving communities and residents as well as volunteer tourists. For instance, research should be undertaken to develop and test a scale measuring the impacts (i.e., benefits and costs) of TEFL VT on host communities. Additionally, outcomes of participating in TEFL VT programs should be measured among residents to assess impacts (e.g., job placement/advancement, quality of life) over time. A longitudinal design would likely be most appropriate to gauge sustained impacts. Survey-based research should also be undertaken among the TEFL volunteer tourists. Some avenues to consider are motivations for this particular form of volunteer tourism (similar to work of Chen & Chen, 2011; Grimm & Needham, 2012), prolonged impacts of serving in a TEFL VT capacity, and satisfaction, constraints, and struggles of serving in TEFL VT positions. As the demand for this niche form of volunteer tourism grows throughout Thailand and across the globe, so too should our research inquiry in efforts to sustainably plan to meet the needs of the communities and residents impacted as well as the volunteers who are called to serve.

Author contribution

The corresponding author was the primary contributor and responsible for study conception/design, acquisition of data, analysis/interpretation of data, and drafting of the manuscript. The second author reviewed the data/analysis and was responsible for a critical revision of the manuscript.

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