

The Pennsylvania State University  
The Graduate School

**CONVIVIAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING AMID THE CRISIS OF  
SUSTAINABILITY:  
RECLAIMING A “LANGUAGE-AS-COMMONS” ORIENTATION IN ENGLISH  
LANGUAGE TEACHING**

A Dissertation in  
Curriculum & Instruction

by  
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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements  
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

August 2019

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## ABSTRACT

In an era of sustainability crises, including climate change, war, and the accelerating loss of biological, cultural, and linguistic diversity, those working in the field of teaching English (including English language teachers and teacher educators) must engage in “honest bookkeeping” (Orr, 1992, p. 5) to ethically account for the complicity of English and English teaching in these present crises. The field of English language teaching has for the last half-decade been guided by root metaphors of commodification, consumerism and progress (Bowers, 2006) that have limited the field’s ability to grapple with this complicity, by framing language largely as a resource that is subject to enclosure and privatization.

In response to this dominant orientation toward language as a resource, I argue that the field of TESOL undertake a radical re-thinking of the root metaphors that inform our teaching, teacher knowledge, and teaching practice. The work of social critic and historian Ivan Illich (1926-2002), in particular Illich’s 1973 work *Tools for Conviviality*, forms the basis for a proposed, alternative, “language-as-commons” orientation. Such a convivial, language-as-commons orientation treats standard English as a counterproductive, radical monopoly over communication, rejects the view of language as a “need” to be satisfied, and advocates for vernacular language to be integrated into translingual practices and pedagogies in language learning classrooms.

This project examines how one pre-service teacher, Josie, draws on her own teacher knowledge to make sense of conviviality and a language commons in her own teaching and learning to teach. Using a narrative inquiry methodology (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990), a narrative of Josie emerges, showing both the prospects and limitations facing a radical re-thinking of English language teaching that is oriented around reclaiming conviviality and the commons.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES .....	vi
Acknowledgements.....	vii
Chapter 1 “What Then Must We Do?” The Complicity of English Language Teaching amid the Crises of Sustainability.....	1
Chapter 2 Reviewing the Literature: Sustainability and the Commons .....	15
Sustainability and TESOL.....	16
Teaching the Commons.....	22
Commons, Conviviality, Sustainability .....	27
Chapter 3 Re-orienting Language as Commons: Dispositions for English Language Teaching in the Second Watershed .....	30
Three Moments .....	31
Teaching Language in the Second Watershed .....	34
Turning Language into a "Resource" .....	39
The Disutility of English .....	46
Toward Language-as-commons.....	53
Chapter 4 “ <i>Solving for Pattern</i> ”: <i>A Methodology for Narrative Inquiry into Teacher Knowledge on Language as Commons</i> .....	62
Method/ology .....	67
Setting.....	75
Sustainability Curriculum .....	78
Procedures .....	81
Ethical Considerations.....	85
The Role of the Researcher.....	87

Chapter 5 Josie and Convivial ESL Teaching: A Narrative Inquiry.....	92
"So I Emailed Her" .....	92
"People Don't Like to Take Ownership of Their Mistakes" .....	106
"That Language is Gonna Get You Everywhere" .....	113
Language-as-Commons Orientation in Practice .....	119
 Chapter 6 Implications: Persisting Questions for Reclaiming Language as Commons in Convivial English Language Teaching.....	 123
Persisting Question: What Does Sustainability Have To Do With Teaching ESL? .....	123
Persisting Question: Is it Possible to Re-imagine a Convivial English Language Teaching? .....	 126
 Bibliography.....	 131

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: MacPherson's "ecology of linguistic-cultural-biological transformation .....	19
Figure 2: P. Picasso, <i>Guernica</i> , 1937.....	36
Figure 3: Aerial photo Worthington, Pennsylvania.....	89

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I dedicate this project to my sons Jack and Milo, and to the prospects of a more convivial world for all of our future generations.

I wish to acknowledge my appreciation to all of my committee members for your patience, insight, and guidance over the last five years. I feel very fortunate to have had the chance to work with all of you.

I want to express my deepest gratitude to Madhu Prakash; this project would have never been realized without your willingness to share your insights and wisdom, and having introduced me to Ivan Illich's work.

I also want to express my gratitude to Ivan Illich, albeit posthumously; I remember as a master's student at Penn State in 1998 Ivan Illich was giving one of his final public lectures on campus. It will be one of my lifelong regrets that I stayed in the library writing that evening instead. Yet, Illich's work remains inspiring to me as a vision of a profoundly different and more humane way of living.



*To the primitive the world was governed by fate, fact, and necessity. By stealing fire from the gods, Prometheus turned facts into problems, called necessity into question, and defied fate.*

Ivan Illich, *Deschooling Society*

## Chapter One

### “What Then Must We Do?” The Complicity of English Language Teaching amid the Crises of Sustainability

It is undeniable to any good-faith observer that our planet faces multiple and profound crises of sustainability: proliferation of war and weapons of mass destruction; climate change; and loss of biological, cultural, and linguistic diversity are among the most consequential (Bakalar, 2015; Gillis 2012; IPCC, 2013; Kahn 2016a, 2016b; MacPherson, 2003, 2010; Revkin, 2016; Rosenthal, 2007; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2003). Even more troubling against this backdrop has been the emergence of a “post-truth” era (McIntyre, 2018) in which the denial of these crises has been normalized by assumptions that objective, scientific reality is subordinate to political ideology, under conditions of (social) media echo chambers and hyper-partisanship. Even as such crises of sustainability pose existential threats to humankind (if not in this generation, then certainly future ones), our present political and economic system seems incapable of responding to these crises in any meaningful way (for example, the US withdrawal from the Paris climate agreement in 2017, and the “Yellow Jacket” anti-carbon tax protests in France in 2018; Leonhardt, 2019).

If we are to treat sustainability as the capacity for both current and future generations to live well<sup>1</sup>, it becomes incumbent to not only seek out technological fixes to begin to alleviate such crises, but to also engage in educational and cultural change that will permit our economies, societies, and political systems to enact sustainable solutions to these myriad crises (Orr, 1992) in ways that are convivial (Illich, 1973).<sup>2</sup> Importantly, the cultural work done in the field of education to revitalize a convivial, commons-based social community cannot be limited solely to education that falls under the disciplinary silo of “environmental education” (Nolet, 2009): it is critical to call for new curricula of sustainability literacy and ecological consciousness that is infused throughout all subjects and levels of learning, including, of course, the teaching of English as a Second Language (ESL).

For many emerging and practicing teachers of ESL, not to mention ESL teacher educators, integrating sustainability into their teaching or preparation of teachers may seem at first to be a marginal concern, at least as compared to what seem to be core disciplinary questions like how to promote language acquisition, how to support English learners’ academic success, and how to work effectively across cultural differences in the classroom and community. At the very least, I hope to leave readers of this dissertation

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<sup>1</sup> To live well here refers to the idea of *buen vivir* or *sumak kawsay*, both literally translated as “living well”, the latter an indigenous Andean conceptual alternative that does not define “good living” primarily or exclusively in terms of material, commodified goods (Kothari, Demaria & Acosta, 2014), but rather in terms of conviviality (Illich, 1973) which is explored in much more depth in subsequent chapters. In this sense, to live well is to live with personal dignity and autonomy, accepting common responsibility, and not being subject to the kinds of economic pressures that drive unlimited consumption and growth.

<sup>2</sup> Conviviality here describes an organization of a social world that, in a general sense, is conducive to living shared lives of dignity free from coerced consumption. Chapters 2 and 3 offer a more comprehensive view of Illich’s concept of conviviality, as it is applied to English language teaching pedagogy and practice.

with the clear sense that issues of sustainability and the current sustainability crises are indeed integral to the field of teaching English as a Second Language, even though the field has largely failed to engage in sustained inquiry on how our work is implicated in the ongoing and intensifying sustainability crises, nor has there been critical and focused efforts to understand how the field needs to respond to the emerging effects of such crises. Some of these very present implications for the teaching ESL amid the present crises of sustainability include responding to the mounting numbers of environmental and climate change refugees (Bush, 2013; Milman & Ryan, 2016; Myers, 2002; Veronis, Boyd, Obokata, & Main, 2018), many of whom are identified English learners (Goulah, 2010), including most recently tens of thousands of children from Puerto Rico, who have relocated to the mainland US in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria (Goulah, in preparation). Furthermore, the field of TESOL must respond to the unprecedented crisis in language loss (Nettle & Romaine, 2000; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2003) and recognize the direct relationship between the status of English as the dominant language of schooling, assessment, and employment and the co-occurring loss of intergenerational transmission of indigenous languages (McCarty, Romero & Zepeda, 2006; Wyman et al, 2010). Finally, critical inquiry of sustainability in the work of teaching ESL must also involve confronting the complicity of English language teaching in the global spread of English, itself driven by tacit acceptance of the neo-liberal economic notion of “growth without limits” (Illich, 1973; Sachs, 2010), along with what has been called the “growthism” embedded in our very language (Halliday, 2003, p 167).

Therefore, one part of what this current project requires is a deeper understanding of the teacher knowledge (Xu & Connelly, 2009) that pre-service ESL teachers may

develop in their emerging professional practice which limits or permits them to consider in robust ways how sustainability, conviviality, and the commons can figure into their teaching. Depending on the contexts in which they are working, this may entail teacher knowledge that enables them to evaluate the impact of their English language teaching on local language ecologies, or begin to engage in critical inquiry on how the neo-liberal paradigm and growthism shape what and how they teach in an ESL class. In any case, this kind of teacher knowledge around sustainability, conviviality, and the commons is necessary to do the kind of “honest bookkeeping” (Orr, 1992) that takes into account the harmful and unsustainable effects and unintended consequences of lives, work, and teaching practices that occur amid these present crises of sustainability. In my own teaching of pre-service ESL teachers, it has been daunting to consider ways to facilitate this kind of deep teacher knowledge among emerging teachers, especially when they are still in the process of acquiring the foundational professional knowledge for teaching English, such as effective teaching strategies, SLA theory and research, and culturally responsive pedagogies.

In an earlier study on integrating sustainability literacy into pre-service ESL teacher education, I looked specifically at pre-service teachers’ entry points into conversations on sustainability, in the context of an immersion-abroad experience in Ecuador that they participated in (Katunich, in press). Those pre-service teachers, although open to the idea of considering the role of sustainability in their future professional practice, continued to frame sustainability largely in terms of the superficial (such as recycling) and distinct from the core work they would be doing as future

language teachers. One participant in that study, Sebastian, a secondary math/ESL pre-service teacher, explains that:

I'd like to think that yeah it [sustainability literacy] will be at the forefront of my mind and focus in curriculum but like in reality thinking about how overwhelmed first year teachers are, its like adding this extra layer which is a lot to grapple with. So do I spend 30 minutes talking about parts of speech or 30 minutes talking about climate change?

This pre-service teacher's notion that "talking about climate change" is in competition with what is perceived as the more important core material of language teaching ("talking about parts of speech") is one of the fundamental barriers to making sustainability an integral part of professional discourse and professional identity for English language teachers. I am not suggesting here that teacher educators consider sustainability or conviviality as being "added on" as an additional type of competency to expect emerging teachers to demonstrate. Instead, what is required of TESOL teacher educators and scholars is the re-thinking of our disciplinary discourse so that we become able to talk about the fundamental questions of our work-- what is language, how is it learned, and how is it taught—in ways that speak to and account for our complicity and responsibility in the crises of sustainability.

The work of social critic Ivan Illich (1926-2002) plays a central role in this radical re-thinking that I describe throughout this dissertation. I believe it is most appropriate to introduce Illich's radical critique at this point through his 1968 remarks, "To Hell with Good Intentions", in which Ivan Illich declares unambiguously to a collected group of volunteer summer mission workers to Mexico (the Conference on InterAmerican Student Projects, or CIASP), that the short-term "mission-vacations" these individuals were

undertaking constitute one of the deepest forms of hypocrisy, and affirmed his own long-held position that this kind of “benevolent invasion” ought best be ended. It was a characteristically direct criticism by Illich of “do-good”-ism and half measures of social change that fail to address the fundamental incapacity of any benevolent attempt at “improving” the lives of the poor through the imposition of modern charity, including, most importantly, things like medical aid and schooling. This specific criticism of CIASP is emblematic of Illich’s broader critique (which will be explored in depth in Chapter 3): in the late modern era, institutions have come to insert themselves in everyday modern life—schooling in particular—proporting to improve lives, but consciously or otherwise, increasing net suffering (or what Illich terms “marginal disutility”, 1973, p 7), as the capacity for autonomy and self-sufficiency has disappeared in the face of growing institutions that reject and delegitimize vernacular (which is to say, traditional, home- and place-based) ways of living.

Illich, musing why then he had been invited to address the CIASP assembly, despite his own opposition to their work, concludes there must be one of three reasons animating the invitation: perhaps the leaders themselves are seeking to unwind this kind of mission work and wish to use the thrust of Illich’s remarks to achieve that; or on the other hand, he may have been invited as a contrarian, presenting the opportunity for CIASP leadership to dispute arguments made against their work; or finally, Illich suggests “you might have invited me here hoping to agree with most of what I have to say, and then go ahead in good faith and work this summer in Mexican villages” (Illich, 1968). For Illich, the final rationale is one that can be grounded only in willful ignorance or disinterest. Illich proceeds in the remainder of the address to inform the prospective

volunteers that their only work in the village will be disruption, from which they themselves will walk away with a stilted picture of life there, filtered through the words and cultures of the small elite class who have the desire and capacity to communicate in English with the do-gooder American summer missionaries. Illich subsequently calls for the summer missionaries to give up “their legal right to impose their benevolence on Mexico... and recognize [their] inability, powerlessness, and incapacity to do the ‘good’ which [they] intended to do”. In other words, they ought to stay home, work in schools and communities that they know and are a part of, rather than trying to act out their so-called “good intentions” a thousand miles away.

Just as Illich prefaces his critique of what has come to be called “service-learning” trips with a reflection on why exactly he, of all people, would have been invited to address such a group of volunteers, I likewise want to reflect, in this introduction, on why I would invite Ivan Illich, of all scholars, into this present work, given that one important context of the research I will describe here (see Chapter 5) is indeed situated in an immersion abroad experience in Latin America (i.e., the Penn State ESL Certificate Program with Ecuador Immersion). For a number of reasons, I imagine, Illich would likely disapprove of not only the ESL Certificate Program with Ecuador Immersion, not the least of which would be the “good intentions” of traveling to another country with the desire to teach/inflict English, but would also disapprove of much of the entire pedagogical basis for the very field of TESOL, which itself has become a radical monopoly (Illich, 1973, see Chapter 3), in which an externally defined “need” (Illich, 2010), in this case English, can only be satisfied from the outside, through industrial, institutionalized schooling, historically provided by native-speaking English teachers,



who by definition are people outside (and implicitly above) the worlds of the English learners. Therefore, if, as an English language teacher and teacher educator I am doing what Illich suggests that CIASP was doing by simply wanting to listen to Illich's critique yet continue in my work in good faith without fully reckoning with the complicity of English and English language teaching in contributing to the present crises of sustainability, then I am one who is guilty of willful ignorance. One goal of this project is to bring an unflinching critique on a number of unexamined assumptions in the work of English language teaching—namely, by arguing that, when done without conviviality, English language teaching can be an economically, ecologically, psychologically (or even spiritually) destructive practice, and that there is nothing sustainable nor convivial about an ideology of language teaching and learning that obliges learners to alienate themselves from the vernacular languages and ways of being that sustain individuals, families, and communities.

Throughout much of Illich's life's work, he strived to re-imagine what a "balance of purpose" (1973, p. 81) in a shared, convivial, community life could be; one of the key goals of this dissertation project is to show how the work of teaching and learning English can be reimagined in the context of this kind of shared, community life, bound together by the vernacular, place-based, bottom-up languages of the "social majorities" (Esteva & Prakash, 2014), rather than the cosmopolitan, dis-embedded, and elite language of English. I suggest that the spread of English over the so-called "second watershed" (see chapter 3), and the dispositions and orientations toward English in this era have largely worked in opposition to the development of a sustainable world governed by a "a balance of purpose" that places the values of individual autonomy and

dignity above the goals of a neoliberal economic system promoting growth without limits: this is what Illich (1973) describes as “conviviality” (p. xxiv) and is central to this project of re-orienting the work of teaching English around a revitalized language commons. Those who practice teaching English at this moment in history (not to mention those who are ESL teacher educators) ought to be presented with an opportunity to re-imagine their work in terms of communities, human dignity, and concern for the well-being of future generations—in other words, to learn to teach language convivially and sustainably, rather than obliging the dehumanizing forces of the predominant, industrial system of education. For me, saying “to hell” with the dominant paradigm of English teaching is not a rejection of the profession of teaching English (and ESL teacher preparation), but an act of love toward my chosen profession. I seek a deeper understanding of the complicity of our work in our world’s present crises, an understanding which is necessary to achieve as we, teachers and teacher educators in ESL, work toward a new vision of English language teaching which is re-constructed as a convivial tool in service of the commons. I begin, here, by saying “hell no” or “*ya basta*” to the predominant, neo-liberal, industrial institutions that have up to this point directed the work of English language teaching; however, it is also incumbent that, along with the critique, we explore what we begin to do differently. This current project therefore, can be read as an extended question of “*what then must we do?*”

It was this question -- “what then must we do?”-- posed to those working in TESOL, which I first heard asked by Christopher Brumfit at a 2003 conference on the complicity of English language teaching in the new era of Anglo-American imperialism marked by the Iraq War (2003-2011). In a subsequent chapter in a collected volume of

papers from the conference, Brumfit (2006) follows this question with another--“who gets hurt when we speak, write and teach?”, both questions informed by the crisis of an earlier decade—the US neo-conservative war and subsequent occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq, and the complicity of English language teachers in that project. Edge (2003), Kumaravadivelu (2006) and Brumfit (2003, 2006) among others attest how English language teaching has been and continues to be a language of imperial military power, deeply complicit in the infrastructure of war-making<sup>3</sup>; Brumfit’s question in particular asks what then we may do to resist, undermine or complicate that relationship, if we choose to continue to work in a complicit project such as teaching English. Broadening Brumfit’s question, it is necessary to consider the extent to which English language teaching at this moment is complicit in the perpetuation of the infrastructure of the neoliberal economic regime, economic growth without limits, and the widespread cultural and linguistic monoculture (including the current catastrophic loss of linguistic diversity) that characterize the present crises of sustainability.

Brumfit’s first question is still apt today because it speaks directly to paralysis as both dangerous and likely: emerging teachers may hesitate to acknowledge the complicity of a field they are only entering, while practicing teachers and teacher educators may carry professional identities that resist characterization as complicit. After all, we, as language teachers want to see ourselves and our work as “good.” Professional and personal paralysis becomes justified as we face the doubt, skepticism and cynicism of

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<sup>3</sup> I would point the reader here to reflect on the specific the relationships between the Penn State Intensive English program (and other English language institutes) and the training of Saudi military in the English needed to operate weapons used in the current Yemen conflict. In quite an immediate way, English language teaching bears some level of complicity in a conflict that has led to, as of Nov 2018, over 57,000 civilian deaths (Pavlik, 2018); however, neither individual teachers nor the field as a whole appear prepared to engage in conversation about our responsibility.

the post-truth era (McIntyre, 2018). As I grapple with the complicity of English language teaching, I often feel as if there are only two clear choices: to look away and refuse to grapple with the complicity of our work as English teachers in economically, environmentally, and even spiritually destructive work; or to walk away and abnegate the entire project of teaching of English as possibly so irredeemably bound to imperialism, consumerism, and growthism that it can never be effectively separated from the Western mindset of “development” and progress (see Nakagawa, in preparation, for this argument). At times, I myself feel deeply skeptical that there can be a third possibility – one in which the English, and the teaching of English, can be re-imagined as a convivial tool and practice.

In the sense that this project is a project of *hope* (Illich, 1971), I suggest that the third way, the way forward, has to be to help emerging and practice teachers, and of course ourselves, critique the kinds of root metaphors of anthropocentrism, commodification, consumerism and progress that seep into our minds in the late capital era like the air we breathe. The idea of root metaphors comes largely from the work of Chet Bowers (1993, 2006, 2012) for whom root metaphors are words, signs or symbols “passed down over many generations and become the codes through which we think and see the world and everything in it” (Lowenstein, Martusewicz, & Voelker, 2010, p. 101). In Lowenstein, Martusewicz, and Voelker’s (2010) work on teaching pre-service teachers from a “eco-justice pedagogy” stance, such root metaphors described above are to be interrogated, with emerging teachers asking how these root metaphors shape how we see the world and act in it—allowing us to resist or reject those root metaphors that do not reflect our own values toward each other, our communities, and our planet. In an

important sense, this dissertation reflects some of the same goals as Lowenstein, Martusewicz, and Voelker (2010) in that one of the goals is to facilitate pre-service teachers, like Sebastian above, to develop their own teacher knowledge that allows them to teach English in a way that resists rather than affirms the destructive dominant root metaphors of the present era, including anthropocentrism, commodification, consumerism and progress, which have profoundly shaped how we see our work and lives as teachers, citizens, humans, and members of a planetary ecosystem.

Crucially, as Lowenstein, Martusewicz, and Voelker (2010) note, preparing teachers to teach an eco-justice pedagogy not only requires a deep understanding of subject matter around climate change or biodiversity, but “through the examination of this content, they must also confront their own, often deeply-seated, aims and beliefs about social and ecological relationships. The personal and professional always merge in teacher learning” (p 105). Likewise, any way forward toward a more sustainable, convivial practice of English language teaching demands that teachers and teacher educator consistently confront those assumptions that shape what and how we teach. It is worth noting here that while, in the discourse of preparing teachers to work with English learners the term of a “root metaphors” has not been widely acknowledged, the disciplinary discourse in TESOL has recognized to some degree the importance of questioning one’s own dispositions toward English learners and English teaching, as well as one’s orientations toward language diversity and differences (see here among others Lucas & Villegas, 2013; Coady, Harper, & de Jong, 2011; Villegas 2007; Hult & Hornberger, 2016; Flores, 2018; Ruiz, 1984). When discussing individual dispositions and collective orientations toward alternate ways of conceiving of the work of English

language teaching, I suggest this is analogous in substantive ways to the ways that those working in eco-justice pedagogy (Bowers, 1993; 2006; 2012; Lowenstein, Martusewicz, & Voelker, 2010; Martusewicz, Edmundson, & Lupinacci, 2014) have conceptualized root metaphors, particularly so in the kinds of challenges that teacher educators face in preparing pre-service teachers, who are pushed to not only learn the subject matter but to also interrogate, in sometimes painful or difficult ways, their own ways of being on this planet.

To this end, I want propose that a third option to respond to the question “what then must we do?”, between paralysis and abnegation, is to re-imagine how our work as English language teachers, in which we re-orient the work of English language teaching around new metaphors that assume alternate ways of understanding human interaction that reject or resist dominant root metaphors of commodification and consumption. In other words, I suggest that this option calls for English language teachers and teachers to begin to reclaim the *commons* in the work of English language teaching and learning, which I elaborate upon in the subsequent two chapters.

In the following chapters I want to make the case for what a new orientation toward the commons and conviviality in English language teaching might look like and how it might be put into practice. In chapter 2, I review a small but important existing body of literature that has begun to re-frame the work of English teachers in light of the crises of the present era, noting that while there have been important contributions made to understanding the relationships between the environment and language (for example the contributions by MacPherson 2003, 2010 on *biolinguistic sustainability*), this previous work has not explicitly connected English teaching to the work of teaching (in)

the commons nor teaching convivially. Thus, the second half of chapter 2 provides a short overview of the literature that illuminates what is meant by the idea of the commons and teaching the commons, which can be applied to the project of English language teaching. In chapter 3, I propose a new “language-as-commons” orientation toward the teaching and learning of language, drawn largely from the critique of Illich, and based on the idea “conviviality” in English language teaching. In chapters 4 and 5, I connect this language as commons orientation to the development of the teacher knowledge of one pre-service teacher, Josie, who I worked with, observed, and interviewed over a period of one year, exploring the ways in which throughout the process of Josie’s learning to teach and teaching, a language-as-commons orientation is both enacted and resisted. In the concluding chapter, I articulate some of the persistent questions that remain, genuinely asking whether such a radical re-imagination is a viable option in light of the hegemonic ideologies of commodification and consumerism that shape what and how teach, including language.

## Chapter Two

### Reviewing the Literature: Sustainability and the Commons

In this chapter, I review two bodies of literature that that this dissertation both draws from and contributes to: 1) scholarship in applied linguistics and TESOL that has connected language teaching and learning to broader issues of sustainability, and 2) scholarship on “the commons”, in particular the body of literature that speaks to how the idea of the commons informs teaching and learning, in what has been in some settings called “commons-based pedagogy”.

There is a small but important body of scholarship in applied linguistics and TESOL that has been aiming to make sense of the linguistic dimensions of the sustainability crises along with the responsibility of the field of TESOL to work in ways that ensure biological, linguistic and cultural diversity for future generations (MacPherson, 2003, 2010; Pennycook, 2010; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2003). As important as this previous work has been, to my knowledge, this first body of research has not in a robust way spoke to the ways in which teaching English can relate to a reclaimed, revitalized commons. Thus, in the second part of this chapter I provide a brief overview of the idea and practice of the commons (in particular what I mean when I am talking about the term *commons* in this dissertation) and how it has been taken up in commons-based pedagogies, such as ecojustice pedagogy (for example, Lowenstein, Martusewicz, & Voelker, 2010; Martusewicz, 2005; Martusewicz., Edmundson, & Lupinacci, 2014).



## **Sustainability and TESOL**

Although small and often marginal to the broader disciplinary discourse, there have been in the field of TESOL, as well as in related work in applied linguistics, steps to begin to account more fully for the role of English teaching in addressing such crises of sustainability. Recent work by Goulah (2017, 2010) has been valuable in this conversation, suggesting that ESL curricula begin to take into account the new and complex relationships between environment, culture, language and spirituality that characterize our work in the so-called Anthropocene Era (Steffen, Crutzen, & McNeill, 2007), and arguing for English language teachers to consciously and purposively orient our curricula and practices toward the creation of values that sustain individuals, communities, and the planet as a whole.

Although Goulah (2017) along with other recent contributions in the field taking up sustainability (see Katunich, in press; Katunich, Goulah, Badenhorst, & Smolcic, 2017; MacPherson, 2003, 2010) have been among the more recent advocates speaking on sustainability in TESOL, it is worth noting that ecological considerations in applied linguistics have been part of the disciplinary discourse since at least the early 1970's (Haugen, 1972). The project of language ecology, which has been defined most broadly as the study of language in interaction with its environment (Haugen, 1972; do Couto, 2014), has not been a unified project however, with attention paid variously to the linguistic, social, or even mental environment as the object of ecological observation (do Couto, 2014; Steffensen & Fill, 2014). Only as a subset of inquiry has language ecology taken up the question of how languages are embedded in and interact with their natural and biological environments (Steffensen & Fill, 2014). As an example of this latter body

of work, Nash and Muhlhausler (2014) illuminate how the Pitcairnese language (a South Pacific pidgin language) evolved as an “ecologically-embedded language” (p. 28) that retained linguistic features that connected it to the ecological meaning of the place in which the language emerged. They contrast this to English, for which Nash and Muhlhausler (2014) suggest, an ecological relationship is not possible, as a disconnected, globalized, commodified language. English, in other words, is equivalent to an “exotic” or “invasive” species in the global language ecology (Muhlhausler, 2003).

Once it is agreed that English is “invasive” in the same sense as a species, then this suggests the reality of an “endangered language” that may be analogous to an “endangered species” (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2003); endangered languages, like endangered species, demand protective measures—in the case of language, this may mean language status planning and policy oriented toward “conservation”. Without dismissing the seriousness of language loss in our present era, Pennycook (2010) challenges the soundness of this analogy between *language* and *species*. First of all, as alarms about the impending crisis of language loss are being raised (for instance, Skutnabb-Kangas’ 2003 claim that up to 90% of languages are at risk of extinction in this century), Pennycook (2010) asks the more fundamental question of how languages are counted: what constitutes a variety within a language or a distinct one? As Makoni and Pennycook (2005) have questioned, the oft-cited number of 6800 language that are claimed to currently exist on our planet, is in many ways a fictitious number that reflects rather the intellectual legacy of European colonialism that treated language as a bounded, discrete, and countable object, rather than the reality of language as a highly varying, local phenomenon. Moreover, as Pennycook (2010) notes, languages, as local and cultural

phenomena, evolve far more quickly than biological species, changing dramatically over single generations. Moreover, languages are by nature adaptable to changing environments, while biological species cannot evolve their way out of biological pressures that arise from climate change or habitat loss. Pennycook (2010) points out a very real concern that language preservation discourse can be deeply exoticizing, disempowering, and even dehumanizing to members of indigenous or minority language communities. Understanding languages as local practices means that these local practices shift in the face of changing local realities: there simply are no “pure” languages to be protected and conserved, and English can and has been localized as a meaningful practice throughout the post-colonial world. A localized English is neither exotic nor invasive in a local language ecology (see Muhlhausler, 2003).

Such a turn toward local practice—recognizing that there are no “pure”, endangered languages in need of protection-- appears to complicate how those working as English language teachers might respond to the threat of language loss, especially the loss of indigenous language in communities where they teach. I suggest however, that the “local” turn in applied linguistics does not absolve English and English language teachers of responsibility for the marginalization and disappearance of indigenous languages around the world; even as Pennycook (2010) suggests, “the death of indigenous Australian languages came about, and continues drastically today, not because .... English is better adapted to that environment but as a result of colonization, genocide, racism, educational practices and shifting social, cultural and economic practices” (98). Indeed, colonization, genocide and racism have all clearly played a role in the magnitude of language loss, but the “educational practices” that Pennycook (2010) points to as well

are indelibly educational practices *in English*. These English-language educational practices, including the ways in which monolingual, native-speaking English norms are perpetuated, continue to drive hundreds or thousands of languages or meaningful language varieties to extinction in the present era (Harrison, 2007).

It is here that I ask bluntly, to what extent the field of TESOL has accepted professional responsibility for ensuring the sustainability of indigenous languages in the communities where ESL teachers are working and teaching. MacPherson (2003) has been one of a few voices calling for “a biolinguistically sustainable approach to TESOL” (p. 1), which she refines and elaborates in a book-length treatment in MacPherson (2010). MacPherson (2003, 2010) offers both hypothetical and actual cases in which pedagogical choices in the teaching of English—in this case, teaching Tibetan refugees in India—can be devastating or sustaining to indigenous languages and cultures, as well as the ecological environments in which these languages and cultures are embedded. MacPherson’s (2003, 2010) major contribution, which I suggest has been largely overlooked in the last decade, is a framework for describing a set of relations that constitute an ecology between language, culture, and environment, that can allow teachers to see, discuss, and critique the sometimes indirect effects of teaching language upon cultural and cultural practices:

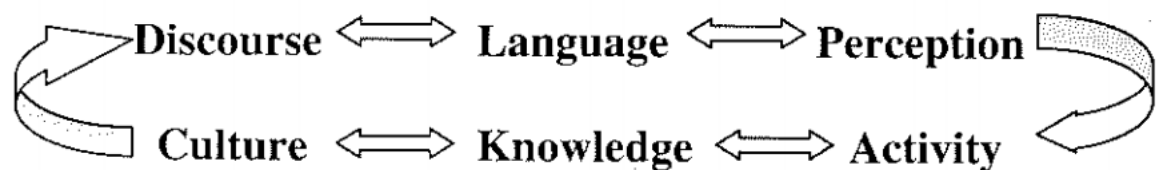


Figure 1: MacPherson’s (2010) “ecology of linguistic-cultural-biological transformation”

In her case study, MacPherson (2010) notes for example how the introduction of Western forestry discourse in English in Himalayan India has changed how people speak (introducing commodified language like “timber”), thus changing how they see a forest, engage with a forest, develop indigenous knowledge about food or medicinal product in a forest, and thus restrict their activities there; by this process, Western, neoliberal economic values enter along with English, marginalizing or erasing traditional cultural modes of interacting in and with a forest.

This challenge of ensuring linguistic sustainability in TESOL may be one area in which the relationship between TESOL and sustainability is becoming more evident. We see, as one example, David Harrison, a leading expert on the documentation and preservation of endangered languages as a keynote speaker at the 2019 TESOL convention. However, the challenge of language preservation in the face of the global spread of English is only one, of a number of dimensions, in which the relationship between the teaching of English and the present crises of sustainability has been occluded or ignored. I believe the field of teaching ESL has failed to engage in sustained inquiry on how as a field we respond to the breadth of sustainability crises, including not only linguistic sustainability, but also responding to climate change (Goulah, 2017), the threat of armed conflict and nuclear weapons (TESOL, 1984), and the complicity of English teaching in the neoliberal economic regime (Bowers, 2012; Flores 2013, Flores, 2018). This oversight may reflect the limitations that arise from entrenched root metaphors (Bowers, 2006) in how we think about languages, having viewed languages as largely as objects to be treated as resources, and subject to commodification and exploitation (Kelly-Holmes, 2010; Tupas, 2008), which in turn justifies the application of a neo-

liberal economic logic to language (Flores, 2013; Holborow, 2015), and leaves as unexamined the unsustainable growth and consumption demanded by the neoliberal logic, and thus the role that English language teaching plays in the ongoing crises of sustainability.

There have been relatively few attempts have been made to interrogate the kinds of root metaphors that shape English as a Second Language (ESL) pedagogy, practice, and curricula, especially root metaphors such as anthropocentrism, commodification, consumerism and progress (see Lowenstein, Martusewicz, & Voelker, 2010) One of the most incisive critiques of the neoliberal root metaphors of English language teaching has been Bowers (2012), who, from the perspective of a disciplinary outsider, articulates the ways in which English language teachers are responsible for the reproduction of the values embedded in root metaphors both across time and into new sociocultural contexts.

Given Bower's own professional identity as a highly cited and influential scholar in environmental education and eco-justice pedagogy (but not in the field of language teaching or ESL), I believe that it is significant that Bowers (2012) spends an entire chapter in his 2012 book on educational reform to speak specifically to the teaching of English. For Bowers, root metaphors of "development" and "progress" have become indispensable in late modern capitalism for English language teachers to understand and talk about their work<sup>4</sup>. Significantly for language teachers, we have to be especially cognizant of how our root metaphors inform how we see the meaning of terms like "development", "science", "progress", or "poverty", as we risk what Bowers (2012) calls

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<sup>4</sup> I would add one particularly telling example from our disciplinary discourse: the term "English language *development*," which has so ubiquitous as to be unremarkable, despite being clearly framed by the language of the neoliberal economic paradigm.

“linguistic colonization” (p. 47) when we teach the meaning of these ideas in ways that transmit the root metaphors of Western neo-liberalism. Bowers (2012), like MacPherson (2003, 2010), sounds an alarm for the prospective damage that teachers of English can inflict beyond language death: that there are costs to local cultures, languages, and ecologies—costs that are almost always unaccounted for-- when teaching English.

Bowers (2012) must be read as a call to not only better understand the root metaphors that inform what we do, but to move toward adopting new metaphors that are better suited to the challenges facing the world in an era of sustainability crises. The metaphors that justify privatization and enclosure, along with the commodification of all social goods and interactions, provide no “way forward”; rather than enclosure of the commons, it is the revitalization of the commons that Bowers (2012) would suggest we look to, to inform how and what we teach, in this case, as English language teachers.

### **Teaching the Commons**

The idea of “commons”, like the concept of “sustainability” can come across as protean: it can mean almost anything to anyone. At Penn State, one can find a desk for studying (if lucky) at the Pattee Library “Knowledge Commons” while, more problematically, one can shop at Wal-mart, TJ Maxx or Staples at the “Carlisle Commons” a few blocks from where I am current living. Neither those two “commons”, nor the countless other cases where the word “commons” has been facilely appropriated, are “commons” in any sense of shared ownership, common use, and collaborative management. While some public spaces may be legitimately be considered “commons”,

it is inaccurate to consider “commons” as somehow synonymous with public places like parks or libraries, let alone public shopping centers (Wall, 2014). In academic scholarship as well, there is broad range of what the “commons” refers to; important thinkers inside and outside of education including Theobald (1997), Bowers (2012), Shiva (2010), Martusewicz (2005), Ostrom (1990), Orr (1992), Hardin (1968) and Esteva & Prakash (2014) all make reference to this thing called “the commons”: yet “the commons” may variously signify place and community (Theobald, 1997), a cesspool (Hardin, 1968), land management principles (Ostrom, 1990), or respect for limits (Shiva 2010). Egan (2014) explicitly addresses “the conflicting baggage that travels with the commons” (p. xiii) and distinguishes three distinct frames for understanding the term commons: as ecological place (or space), as practice, or as idea. Before proceeding to a discussion of how the idea of the commons has been picked up in education, I want to clarify how Egan’s (2014) “conflicting baggage” may not be quite as conflicting as it seems, even as there are clear disciplinary and epistemological differences in how the commons are conceived, which are, in some cases, incommensurate to each other.

Thinking about the commons often starts with place or space, and in part, this tendency to locate commons largely in terms of a physical space can be problematic. The bias toward treating commons as a shared place or space has led to a broader misunderstanding of the relationship between the commons and sustainability, at least since Hardin’s (1968) “Tragedy of the commons”, which would establish the popular notion that commons are by definition a form of ecological *degradation*, rather than *preservation*. By looking at the commons as a physical if hypothetical space in which



rational actors (such as herders grazing animals on a hypothetical open pasture) seek to maximize their own benefit while being able to avert any negative consequences of overgrazing that are distributed over the group, Hardin (1968) has had a lasting impact on the conventional understanding of the commons, including reifying the idea of the “tragedy of the commons” as a social trap that prevents meaningful movement toward sustainability (Orr, 1992).

Despite the impact that Hardin (1968) has played on conventional understanding of the commons, I suggest that the critical shortcoming in Hardin’s analysis is any lack of distinction here between commons as ecological *space* (which Hardin seems to be suggesting) and commons as ecological *place* (which may offer a more illuminating understanding of how Hardin’s hypothetical herdsman would behave in a real setting). Tuan (1977) was among the first to consider how space and place differ conceptually, suggesting *space* as homogenous, interchangeable, and removed from history (think chain restaurants or parking lots) whereas places are unique, and characterized by culture and historicity. Likewise, Sachs (2010) offers his vision of “place” that is an alternate to “space” in that “place” is occupied and made meaningful by human activity, thus making “places” lived and local, thus potentially receptive to commons-based practices that are not necessarily driven by an economic logic of maximizing utility. Places are characterized by histories, traditions and relationships—all of which play critical roles in establishing practices of the commons that are sustainable and do not inevitably lead to degradation in the absence of enclosure, coercion or outside enforcement.

By speaking of commons as *place*, that is to say as being occupied and defined by human activity, the link between an ecological, physical commons and commons as a set

of practices becomes clearer and provides a way to understand how Esteva and Prakash (2014) along with Lummis (1996) link the commons to practices of genuine and radical democracy. These commons, unlike Hardin's (1968), are not characterized by unregulated, open access, but rather through practices of shared local governance. Such regulatory practices may include explicit community rules and enforcement (Ostrom, 1990), local cultural traditions (Esteva & Prakash, 2014), respect or connection to a sense of place (Berry, 1990) or the sacrality of the commons (Shiva, 2010).

Commons as exclusive, in the sense that they must be intimately connected to the recognition of *limits*, is a critical, defining feature of commons. In acknowledging how in practice, commons are governed by a respect for limits, we are able to connect the notion of “commons as practice” to the broader “commons as idea” that Egan (2014) notes. Looking at the ways in which most non-Western, pre-industrial societies have related to the ecological and physical commons of forest or other places of nature, Shiva (2010) characterizes these relationships as spiritual. For those in these societies the forests were the source of the clean water, food, and fuel that quite literally sustained them, and thus naturally lead to the idea of the commons as sacred. Only after the introduction of Baconian science and industrial economy did these life-giving sources (literally *re*-sources—see Chapter 3 for further discussion here) become transformed into “natural resources” that were viewed as material for commercial exploitation. Reclaiming the commons then means reclaiming an idea that animated and sustained human beings for the vast duration of human existence: that we must uphold values of *responsibility*, *respect*, and *restraint* as principles that govern how we are to interact with the commons (Shiva, 2010), be it a forest, our atmosphere, or language. Observing the

seemingly unstoppable global spread of English in the post-war era (Crystal, 2012), one might ask how little restraint has in fact governed the practices of the field of TESOL. I suggest that this idea of the commons that Shiva (2010) presents aligns with Illich's own notion of conviviality, which I explore as a core concept in imagining how the commons can be reclaimed in language teaching and learning in subsequent sections.

The commons has been taken up by educational and curriculum theorists largely in the context of a sub-field that has been called eco-justice pedagogy.<sup>5</sup> Scholars that have helped form the field termed "eco-justice pedagogy", include Chet Bowers (1993, 2002, 2006) and Rebecca Martusewicz (Martusewicz, 2005; Lowensten, Martusewicz, & Voelker, 2010; Martusewicz., Edmundson, & Lupinacci, 2014), who have explicitly centered their work in a conceptualization of the commons that aligns with ideas suggested by Shiva (2010) around respect for limits within the context of shared and sacred places. As Martusewicz (2005) describes

[B]eyond a limited definition of the commons as shared land, it also included all the other symbolic or cultural forms, the institutions, languages, practices, discourses and traditions, that bind communities together in service to one another. Since neither the state nor the market does not determine it, the commons is not public or private, nor is it defined by infinitely expanding needs as in a market-based system. It is, rather, defined by *limits* that are understood by those who regulate it. (p. 335, emphasis added)

There are clear parallels between the commons on which Bowers, Martusewicz, and other eco-justice writers center their commons-based pedagogies, and the defining

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<sup>5</sup> It is important to note here a danger that "commons" may get misapprehended as any kind of shared social life. For example, Theobald (1997) in his influential work on place-based education *Teaching the Commons* evokes what he calls "the commons", but is actually talking about "community". What Theobald (1997) fails to articulate (which distinguishes "the commons" from "community") is the self-regulated practices that govern a commons to be sustainable. In discussing "commons-based pedagogies" here I am really focusing on the idea of the commons based on the respect for limits and the sacred that Shiva (2010) and Bowers (2006) orient their work around.

characteristic of limits and restraint that reflect the thought of the post-development school (including Sachs, Shiva, Esteva, Prakash, and of course Illich), even though it is unclear the degree to which Bowers, Martusewicz, or other eco-justice writers were directly informed by Illich's work. I suggest however Illich's work is particularly salient if we wish to re-orient the work of English language teaching toward the commons; Illich's critique will be picked up in the next chapter, to inform a theoretical framework of a "language-as-commons" orientation to language teaching and learning.

### **Commons, Conviviality, Sustainability**

In conclusion, I want to clarify these connections between the efforts to reclaim a commons in our schools, communities, and world, and the broader discourse of sustainability. To be sure, sustainability has been a term so very broadly applied and misapplied (Leal Filho, 2000) that when talking about the classical notion of sustainable development (Brundland, 1987) or education for sustainable development (Leal Filho, 2014), it may not be that sustainability in all of these senses mean a revitalized, reclaimed commons for the "social majority" (Esteva & Prakash, 2014). Instead, the idea of "sustainability" may be used to justify the further broadening of the scope and influence of a neoliberal marketplace, driven by the satisfaction of present and future "needs" (Illich, 2010) rather than ensuring the ability of future generations to take care of their own necessities. Sustainability in this sense has largely been a *Promethean* exercise of pushing technological progress to stay one step ahead of these ecological, economic, psychological and spiritual crises. It appears to me, as well as to others (see Illich, 1971) that doubling down on the same neoliberal, industrial practices of enclosure and

privatization that have characterized the last half-century will not get us out of our current crises that have been prompted by those practices. Thus, this call for a turn to the commons.

As noted above, the idea of commons itself remains disputed, and it can be observed that from a neo-liberal perspective, the commons may actually appear to be fundamentally more unsustainable than enclosure, as we see in Hardin's (1968) tragedy of the commons argument. As I have suggested above, it is necessary to recognize that commons, when grounded in a particular place and community, are not unregulated as Hardin (1968) implies. One principle that I suggest here as a guiding principle for regulating (and importantly, *limiting*) growth and consumption in a commons, is the idea of "conviviality," a fundamental idea drawn from Illich (1973).

To be convivial describes the condition of acknowledged limits in which "technologies serve ... individuals rather than managers" (p xxiv) and the act of "turn[ing] people into the accessories of bureaucracies and machines" is rejected (p. xxiv). For Illich, a return to more convivial tools in human technology is crucial if humankind hopes to keeping human activity within "parameters... within which human life remains viable" (p xxiii). Importantly, conviviality is more than getting along well in a shared life (although it requires peaceable co-existence and eschewing violent conflict), but for Illich, and for the purposes of this project, conviviality a way of re-organizing the relationships between people and their tools and technology. It is also important to recognize that conviviality does not imply a neo-Luddite rejection of all technology, as Illich has been inaccurately accused of (Cayley, 1992); for example, Illich recognizes the technology of the bicycle as a convivial tool, in comparison to the automobile, insofar as

one's use of a bicycle does not negatively reduce others' abilities to transport themselves or take care of one's own necessities. Conviviality, instead, is a reflection of the reality that we live in a world governed by the "fate, fact, and necessity" (Illich, 1971, p.154) of limits, an explicit rejection of the so-called "Promethean" ethos of unending progress and problem-solving (Illich, 1971).<sup>6</sup>

It is because of the rapidly intensifying effects of our industrialized and institutionalized tools in the late industrial era that were originally intended to improve the quality of lives (that is to say, tools such as planes, automobiles, and factories, not to mention the industrial exploitation of human data that Illich could not anticipate, and of course the powerful tool of English as a global language), that this re-thinking becomes necessary, taking into account more "honest bookkeeping" (Orr, 1992) that assesses outcomes beyond the immediate and short-term. It means that the solutions to our present crises of sustainability can never be adequately resolved by the spread of non-convivial technologies, but rather by means of a revitalized commons based on principles of conviviality across all aspects of our lives, and including the ways in which we teach languages, especially the decidedly non-convivial tool of English. It is this convivial turn in English teaching that I explore more deeply in the next chapter.

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<sup>6</sup> Illich (1971) draws an important contrast between Promethean man (sic) and Epimethean man (sic). While Prometheus (meaning "forward looking") was the god that stole fire from Zeus to give to humankind (and punished for it), Epimetheus (meaning "backward looking") was his brother, who has been characterized by his qualities of reflection, deliberation, and slowing down. Observing how the Promethean ethos has, since antiquity, but increasingly so in the last half-century, devastated our planet, our societies, and our psyches, Illich (1971) has framed his social critique as a call for a "rebirth" of the Epimethean.

## Chapter Three

### Re-orienting Language as Commons: Dispositions for English Language Teaching in the Second Watershed

What might a new orientation to language teaching and learning, one centered on the commons and conviviality, look like? What may be the basis for a re-imagination in which sustainability, limits on growth, and respect for the commons become fundamental issues in the work of English language teaching? What fundamental cultural and educational changes are needed in order to realize a robust vision of sustainability literacy in our curricula for language teaching and language teacher education? In this chapter I suggest that a re-orientation toward *language-as commons* must be central to any project that takes on the complicity of English language teaching in the present crises and provides active and real hope for the kinds of change in English language teaching practices that can support and sustain a “multiple balance” (Illich, 1973) of convivial life.

To date however, relatively little work has been done on relating commons-based pedagogies (let alone conviviality) specifically in the work of language teaching or language teacher education (excepting Bowers, 2012). In the face of this absence of theorizing on a revitalized language commons and the pressing need to articulate how a language commons can inform how language teachers and teacher educators go about their work, I propose that the body of work of Ivan Illich (1926-2002) offers an important alternate theory of language and language learning, one that is grounded in a new “language commons”. To start this chapter however, I want to share three “moments” that will orient us throughout this conversation on language commons, enclosure, and

conviviality, connecting these ideas to the lived experience of three real teachers and learners.

### **Three Moments**

One evening in 2012 after a day-long professional development session for public school teachers in southern Colombia, I was speaking informally with one of the Colombian high school English teachers: she asked me for advice on how to respond to one of her students, David<sup>7</sup>, who had asked her “why do we have to learn this [English]?” She explained to me that David was angry that English was an obligatory subject in Colombian high schools. In part, the resistance to English she described was not unlike the resistance of any teen to a compulsory subject that they do not see the immediate reward for. In response, I suggested that she continue to emphasize the value of English to pursue higher education, obtain a better job, or travel abroad. Over the subsequent days, I kept thinking about David and why his relationship to English was one of anger, and not simply apathy. To David’s teacher, I justified in the moment the study of English as the (only) pathway to an elite higher education, a high paying job, or cosmopolitan travel around the world; I wonder now whether for David, English in his life has served mostly as a way to signify what was always going to be beyond his ability to obtain as a working-class youth in provincial Colombia. David’s anger at English came to seem reasonable and I remain at a loss for a better and more meaningful answer to what his teacher might say to him in order to engage him with English.

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<sup>7</sup> All names are pseudonyms.



Several years later I was talking with Josie, a pre-service early childhood education teacher in the US, who was doing her student teaching in an urban elementary school in a 4<sup>th</sup> grade classroom with a high proportion of English language learners (ELLs). Josie shared that recently one of the students in her classroom, who is a designated ELL student, came to her saying she thought she was ready to move from the ESL class into the mainstream reading class. Josie reported that the ESL teacher refused to consider the change saying, that “she [the student] needs more support.” Josie continued, speculating that it was “she [the ESL teacher who] needs that kid, the star kid who wants to come out, because she's the star kid in the classroom. She's the one who will shine, she's the one who will answer during [the teacher's] observation. I personally think it's because of that, that's why she doesn't wanna let her go... [but] these kids they're just like, ‘I wanna get out. Help me get out.’”

Finally, I recall an interaction I had with Mark, a pre-service teacher getting his ESL program specialist endorsement through the intensive, cultural immersion teaching practicum in Ecuador in which I was teaching. We had just finished a series of classes addressing issues of dominant language ideology, language commodification, and issues of non-native speaker (NNS) discrimination in the field of teaching English. Our class conversations had bluntly grappled with the problems that arise around the present hegemonic position of English. Mark always came across as an idealist and optimist who wanted to make the world a better place, having told me before that one of the biggest reasons for his becoming an English teacher was his religious commitment to making the world a more peaceful, harmonious place. He struggled to reconcile his idea of English

as a cross-cultural, unifying force in the world with the “dark side” of hegemonic English. Mark asked me to meet him for coffee one afternoon, and he started by stating “Sometimes I wonder if you are saying that teaching English is a bad thing.”

These three moments frame the subsequent discussion in this chapter that, like conversations with Mark’s class, asks professional teachers of English to grapple with our complicity in a number of interrelated crises in our world today. Many of us as teachers want or need to see the good in what we do—that we help students like David broaden their life prospects or that we support the academic success of Josie’s 4<sup>th</sup> grade ELL. However, once we begin to contextualize our work amid the ongoing ecological and economic crises, we can come to see how our dominant metaphors of teaching English are grounded in treating language as a resource subject to the economic logic of the market. This is the neoliberal economic metaphor that had informed my initial response to David’s teacher, and I suggest that such a guiding metaphor is no longer appropriate if we, as language teachers, wish to honestly and ethically respond to our complicity in present social, economic, and ecological injustices. Instead, our work must be to imagine and enact new guiding metaphors and dispositions, ones that work to reassert language as a convivial tool and a form of commons. This chapter draws on the work of social critic and historian Ivan Illich (1926-2002) to both contextualize the role of English language teaching in the present crises, as well as to inform new principles of English language teaching that serve convivial purposes. Even as Illich had been a widely recognized public intellectual throughout the 1970s and 1980s (Cayley, 1992; Finger & Asun, 2001), and a contemporary, collaborator, and critic of Paolo Freire (Elias, 1976),

his thought has not had the lasting impact on educational theory, curriculum, and pedagogy as Freire, in part because as Finger and Asun (2001) note, “his critique of dominant education and alternatives he proposed... were too radical even for the radicals” (p. 7). I suggest that his central critique of the crises that were emerging in the 1970’s is as relevant today as it was when he was an active public intellectual, or more so. In reclaiming the critique of Illich and what it says for the work of English language teachers in our present era of crisis, there is a possibility to reclaim a vision for a commons-based, convivial approach to our practice.

### **Teaching Language in the Second Watershed**

To acknowledge the reality, as Orr (1992) among others has suggested, that we are in the midst of multiple crises of sustainability, means addressing crises which require for their solution not only technological innovation but fundamental cultural change and education, due to the “social traps” (Orr, 1992, p 5) that are built into late capitalism, evolutionary biology, and the human condition. The social traps that have prevented humanity from thinking on a planetary scale to mount a robust response to these crises include the relentless and unquestionable focus on growth (what Halliday, 2003 has called “growthism”), the tacit acceptance of applying market logic to all human activity, and deeply ingrained feelings of in-group/out-group tribalism (Orr, 1992).

The field of English language teaching has been no less ensnared by these traps than any other field. Any effort to enact more socially and environmentally just practices in the field of TESOL has to accept the role (and complicity) of the field of teaching

English in what has been called the “Anthropocene Era” (Steffen, Crutzen, & McNeill, 2007), a geological period characterized by the comprehensive and global impact of humanity on ecosystems, including the increase of atmospheric carbon, the spread of invasive species, radioactive emissions, and the ubiquity of plastic polymers. It is incumbent for language teachers and teacher educators to come to ask themselves what it means to teach and learn in the Anthropocene.

Illich offers a related terminology for this era, one that conveys its human, rather than geologic, scale: he refers to our present historical moment as the “second watershed”<sup>8</sup> (p. 2, 1973) which is characterized by a shift not only in the relationship of humans to the physical environment, but also reflects fundamental post-war social changes in the ways that institutions, most particularly the institutions of schooling and medicine, have come to dominate and dictate the human condition. Illich’s critique reveals the extent of the crises of the “second watershed” as another kind of “social trap” that has been preventing humankind from adequately responding to the present existential threats to the continuation of our species as well as other complex life on our planet.

Similarly, Illich (2010) has marked “the epoch... after Guernica 1936” (p. 96), as a qualitatively new era in how humans relate to their tools and technology. Guernica, a

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<sup>8</sup> The “first watershed” for Illich, happened in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when modern institutionalized treatments finally began to approximate the quality of outcomes of traditional approaches. In medicine, for example, the first watershed can be identified when the institutionalized medical profession could deliver outcomes at least as effective as vernacular (or folk-based) approaches to health and healing. Passing the first watershed, humankind sped toward the second in which these institutionalized services were able to not only treat problems but become so ubiquitous that they define the problems they are organized around solving, such as determining what it means to be unhealthy or to be uneducated. The second watershed is characterized by the manufacture of these problems or “needs” faster than the services can be delivered, which, for Illich, is a fundamental explanation for the irrepressible, but unsustainable, desire for economic growth without limits in the present “second watershed” (Illich, 1973, p 1-9).

Spanish village bombed by German aircraft during the Spanish Civil War, symbolized for Illich, as it did Picasso in his epic *Guernica*, “a new terrifying industrial and anonymous warfare” (Walsh, 2017) in which the anonymity of the human now defined her or him; for the German bombers, it no longer mattered who they were bombing, for the human targets were only secondary to the tools of war that the bombing was meant to demonstrate. Post-Guernica, as humans crossed the “second watershed”, human beings mattered less and less as autonomous individuals, and found themselves subject to either programming (at best) or destruction (at worst), *in service of their own technology*. In a post-Guernica world, do we as teachers accept this new dispensation in which the tool (in this case English) is no longer in service to the learner, but instead, the learner becomes programmed for the tool? If we consider, David, the Colombian high school student in our first conversation, it is hard to argue that he is in any way empowered by English, but rather learning English for him and his classmates serves as a form of programming in service of school and economic institutions.



Figure 2: P. Picasso, *Guernica*, 1937, Wikimedia Commons

English language teachers have an ethical responsibility to ask whether “teaching English is a bad thing,” in the words of Mark, the pre-service ESL teacher. Of course, the ethical accounting that looks strictly at the outcomes of our students—our students for whom learning English means better access to education, autonomy, jobs, and money—suggests that teaching English provides an unquestioned benefit. Many of us, after all, enter this field because we *believe* in the work that we do and the value we provide to our students; if we think charitably about the ESL teacher in Josie’s school, she seeks to keep the ELLs in her classroom against their wishes because, she may genuinely believe, they have *needs* that only she can meet.

I want to propose that this kind of ethical accounting that looks only at one’s own students, community, or country, and excludes those who are not in our classes, communities, or countries, represents what Orr (1992) calls a “social trap” in which an observable and rather more immediate outcome (be it a student’s test result or a demonstrated job skill) hides the longer-term and less observable consequences that have to be paid for (such as social stratification based on schooling and long-term and pervasive economic inequality). At the heart of any conversation about sustainability in the work of TESOL is this question of the long-term, unaccounted for consequences of our work, and how “honest bookkeeping would deter entry into social traps” (Orr, 1992, p 5) that the work of English language teaching as long played into.

This “honest bookkeeping” in our work starts with questioning (and replacing) some of the dominant metaphors and paradigms that have been largely taken for granted in the work of English language teaching. Consider, for example, a sign in the hallway of a language department of a prestigious Ecuadorian university that reads (in English):

“The more you LEARN, the more you EARN”. This sign might appear to most English language teachers as an anodyne slogan to motivate university students, for whom English may or may not be their highest priority. What it does, however, is treat language as a kind of resource, which is one of the most deeply held root metaphors (Bowers, 2006) that shape the teaching of English as a second and foreign language. It works as a social trap that hides the broader damage that the spread of English does, occluding sketchy economic assumptions behind this promise of economic benefits accruing from English study, without accounting for whom this maxim applies, and for whom it does not.

At least since Ruiz (1984), this metaphor of language as a resource has shaped the work of teaching English language learners. However, what alternatives are available to replace or complicate the dominant metaphor of “language as resource” to make sense of our teaching of English? One such alternative is to reclaim language as the “commons” that language has long been, observing that throughout human experience, language has primarily been a *vernacular* tool which is put to service by the individuals who use it, rather than the inverse. Such an alternate, vernacular orientation toward language and language teaching can help language teachers and teacher educators articulate new goals for teaching and learning that are no longer dictated by the implicit growthism and imputation of needs that justifies expanding consumption, which have been social traps largely unquestioned by English language teaching field.

## Turning Language into a “Resource”

In his influential and highly cited 1984 article “Orientations in Language Planning”, Richard Ruiz presented a compelling new paradigm for language planning and policy in which three “orientations” to language offered to clarify conceptual, societal, and policy approaches to language, in order to make sense of increasingly diverse language landscapes and the pressing educational policy decisions that needed to be made around language. Ruiz (1984) suggested that two of these orientations-- “language-as-problem” and “language-as-right”-- have long been part of the history of debating bilingual education and bilingualism more generally in the US, yet Ruiz suggests neither fully articulate the more robust rationale for bilingualism that was necessary in the emerging post-Lau bilingual education environment, in which school districts and states across the US became legally obligated to meet the needs<sup>9</sup> of language minority students. For Ruiz (1984), a “language-as-problem” orientation that reflected many local approaches to language minorities ended up driving educational policy and curriculum toward compensatory programs that treated language difference as deficiency, and were ultimately subtractive in nature; at the same time, a “language-as-right” orientation embraced by many bilingual education advocates at the time subjected schools’ and society’s language policy decisions to legal adjudication that presumed an unhelpfully conflictual basis for achieving societal language diversity and bilingualism. Thus Ruiz

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<sup>9</sup> This construction of an educational “need” in the wake of *Lau v Nichols* (1974) may be considered as an excellent example of how “needs” are defined by their satisfaction at the hands of an outsider or dominant group member. Ascribing needs for language minority children in the post-Lau era is analogous to the ascribing the needs of so-called “underdeveloped” societies, such as Western education, flush toilets, and of course, English. Illich (2010) offers a compelling analysis of how “needs” are constructed in development discourse. It is not at all surprising, therefore, that Josie’s earlier description of her ELL student and the ESL teacher she works with is framed in terms of “needs”.



(1984) proposed a third orientation-- "language-as-resource" -- that articulated a more compelling and positive rationale for bilingual education and bilingualism, in which language diversity would be seen as a strength to be cultivated, either in terms of its value to the nation (as benefits to national security, diplomacy, economic competitiveness, or civic engagement) or to the individual (as better prospects for employment and the maintenance of cultural identities and intergenerational connections). Although not the intent of Ruiz (1984), his article marks a key watershed in the discourse of teaching and learning English; in the turn toward "language-as-resource", one's language repertoire comes to be seen as socially, economically, and politically *valuable*— in the sense that it is *able* to be assigned a value. Even though Ruiz (1984) was not at all arguing for the commodification of language as a good or service, from this watershed moment, language has become increasingly subject to the logic of economics, reflecting a neoliberal economic framework that "subsumes under its logic every other form of social interaction in every society it invades" (Esteva, 2010, p 14), including of course, the social interaction of teaching and learning language.

To better understand the significance of this turn toward "language-as-resource", Shiva (2010) offers a critique of the neo-liberal appropriation of the term "resource" itself. Shiva (2010) prompts us to recall the premodern usage of the term "resource" as the quality of life-giving *sources* to "rise again and again" (p 228), like a spring or a forest, literally a *re-source*. For Shiva (2010), as well as MacPherson (2010), it is through the neo-liberal appropriation of language that a "natural resource" becomes no longer a source of life, but a collection of material that is economically valuable. The neo-liberal logic dictates the differentiation between exploitable, commodifiable goods, like

lumber, from a community-held commons, like a forest. It is this logic that justifies the linguistic violence of shifting from “forest” to “timber”, a shift that precedes ecological violence.

Of course, when discussing the concept of language as “resource”, it has been suggested (Hult and Hornberger, 2016) that “linguistic resources are fundamentally different from natural resources” (p. 38), and thus it would be wrong to assume that language *must be* subject to an economic logic in the same way as natural resources are, simply because of the use of the term “resource” which, when referring to language, may denote something distinctly different than when referring to a natural resource.

Interestingly Ruiz (1983, as cited in Hult & Hornberger, 2016) explores this incongruity between linguistic and natural resources, noting that natural resources left in the ground remain there for future generations, while for linguistic resources “the longer we neglect their use, the closer we are to extinguishing them” (Ruiz, 1983 as cited in Hult & Hornberger, 2016 p 39). It is worth challenging this distinction on several counts. First of all, treating language resources as enriched by their use rather than neglect assumes a synchronic, static view of language; it fails to acknowledge that the vernacular languages that are used (if they are brought into use in an industrialized, neo-liberal social context) will be transformed by that use such that the language we have in the end may no longer be the same “resource”. To point out a single example, that of Kichwa, an indigenous language spoken throughout Ecuador, upon its standardization and transformation into a written language, it may no longer (for better or worse) be seen as the same language prior to its standardization (Wreblewski, 2012), but it becomes instead a more logocentric and Westernized variety of the language.

Furthermore, such thinking that “the longer we neglect their use, the closer we are to extinguishing [languages] ” (Ruiz, 1983 as cited in Hult & Hornberger, 2016 p 39) assumes a lack of agency among speakers of minority languages, such that neglect, presumably by the industrial and state apparatuses like schooling and mainstream media, dooms them. It is worth noting here one of the fundamental themes of Illich’s broader critique of schools and other industrialized institutions: that local “commoners” must be much warier of the *attention* of institutions like school and the state than *neglect* by those institutions (Illich, 1971). In terms of linguistic resources, Illich’s critique of the institution suggests that we treat the exploitation of so-called linguistic resources by the state, the economic system, or schools (for purposes such as national security or economic competitiveness) as a process that degrades languages’ viability as convivial, vernacular tools, in very much the same way that exploitation of a forest leads to a similar, degraded outcome. Illich’s critique of institutionalization suggests that the “neglect” of language—in the sense of its exclusion from the industrialized, neoliberal state and its institutions—may offer the only genuine prospect of ensuring the survival of many vernacular languages, including vernacular indigenous languages (Illich, 1978/1992).

The turn toward a “language-as-a-resource” (LaR) orientation throughout the eighties, nineties, and aughts did build support for more robust bilingual policy approaches to schooling for immigrants and other language minorities, even as it also grounded the work of language teaching more firmly in the neoliberal regime. This turn toward LaR paralleled another conversation in the broader field of applied linguistics--

the emergence of the field of study termed “language commodification” (see for example, Holborow, 2015; Rubdy & Tan, 2008) which began exploring questions such as how to understand English language teaching as an industry, how English language skills become valued as a human resource, and how specific varieties and accents of English are commodified in the globalized labor markets of call centers, among other settings (for example, Tupas, 2008). That language is a form of social interaction that can be subsumed under the logic of the master narrative of economics has become in the last decades very much a common-sense, naturalized dimension of a neoliberal language ideology. Illich (1978/1992) suggests a ‘language-economics’ that accounts for the costs of teaching language (which for Illich is what most schooling is about). Illich (1978/1992) points out the tremendous amounts of money are spent to “make the poor speak more like the wealthy” (p 119), and how wealthy countries both absorb and demand huge investments in language teaching (and by language teaching, he does not mean foreign language teaching, but rather the school-based industry of the “taught mother tongue”). In contrast, in so-called developed countries, “people still speak to each other, though their language has never been capitalized, except perhaps, among an ... elite” (Illich, 1978/1992, p 121).

Even as language becomes “capitalized” in a language economy, language does not normally appear to be subject to the classical economic “laws” that are meant to describe the relationship between scarcity and perceived unlimited demand, such as the so-called “law” of supply and demand, which Illich (2010) among others, has pointed out to be applicable to the industrial economy, but far less so to vernacular communities that are not defined by their production and consumption of commodities. Even looking at

commodified language in terms of language products, which Illich (1978/1992) describes as “each paid word to the rich cost[ing] per capita more than each word addressed to the poor” (p 120), it is clear that while there is an assumed principle of scarcity at work that dictates the price of capitalized, commodified language, that does not apply to vernacular language. Uncommodified language that remains as a living vernacular is generally not governed by market economics, even as it remains barred from use in schooling and commerce due to strong social stigmas, a reflection of the *radical monopoly* (Illich, 1973) that characterizes institutionalization amid the second watershed.<sup>10</sup>

Illich (1973) distinguishes between the conventional notion of market monopoly and the radical monopolies that characterize the late modern industrial period. Coca-cola and Pepsi, for example, may hold a monopoly on the selling of carbonated sugar water, but this would not be characterized as radical monopoly by Illich, insofar consumers remain able to choose other ways to satisfy their thirst and no one is compelled to purchase one of their products. Radical monopolies however are structured such that alternatives are rendered unviable by the spread of the radical monopoly. For Illich, the rise of the automobile has constituted one of the most pernicious forms of radical monopoly on transportation. As governments build an infrastructure to accommodate high-speed automobile travel, foot traffic on those highways becomes explicitly illegal or so dangerous as to preclude its use. Similarly, modern medicine and modern schools have come to assert their own radical monopolies on health and learning. To be healthy

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<sup>10</sup> Importantly, the stigmatization and marginalization of vernacular language use vis-à-vis so-called standard varieties can be interpreted as a way of delegitimizing forms of language that are learned and shared without interference from or control by the state, school, or other industrial institutions. Vernacular language, like African American vernacular or white Appalachian vernaculars, pose a fundamental danger to the legitimacy of the taught forms of language that can be subjected to the neo-liberal economic logic.

is defined solely through the process of being treated by medical professionals, just as to be educated is solely defined by having subjected oneself to treatment in schools. In the presence of hospitals and schools, radical monopoly precludes all the other vernacular alternatives, be they traditional healers or informal, intergenerational transmission of indigenous knowledge. For Illich (1973), it is the rise of the radical monopoly and the increase of *counterproductivity*<sup>11</sup> that characterize the human condition in the second watershed.

What previous debates over “language commodification” (see Block, 2017) have failed to recognize are the implications of language becoming subject to a commodified, industrialized radical monopoly of taught, standardized language; home languages, dialects, and vernacular speech become marginalized (and unviable) under an institutionalized standard language regime in the same ways that walking and biking become marginalized (and unviable) modes of transportation in an automotive regime. Even as language remains open to vernacular production (insofar as we all learn to speak our vernaculars without direct intervention from state institutions like schools), language learning and teaching has been industrialized, especially in the form of a massive, “taught mother tongue” industry that comprises most of schooling (Illich 1978/1992). The problem with the turn toward “language-as-a-resource” (Ruiz, 1984), even if oriented toward the expansion of equity and support for language diversity, is that it occurs in the

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<sup>11</sup> “Counterproductivity” has been described by Finger and Asun (2001) as one of the most original and influential of Illich’s theoretical contributions. As institutions in the 20<sup>th</sup> century became more capable of delivering benefits to individuals (such as access to knowledge or healing), there is a point at which the beneficial relationship turns into a pernicious, controlling one. Finger and Asun (2001) point out that “Illich is not against schools or hospitals as such, but once a certain threshold of institutionalization is reached, schools make people more stupid, while hospitals make them sick. And more generally, beyond a certain threshold of institutionalized expertise, more experts are counterproductive - they produce the counter effect of what they set out to achieve” (p. 11).

context of a neoliberal economic regime that continues to assert a radical monopoly over schools, standardized language, and English as a (the?) international language. For this reason, it is critical to articulate an alternate orientation toward language that is not embedded in a neo-liberal logic, but rather one that is grounded in a re-vitalized, reclaimed language commons, which stands in contrast to the neoliberal policies of privatization of learning and enclosure of the commons. Such an alternate orientation entails raising fundamental questions about the utility of English as an international language, and the genuine question on the possibility of disentangling English language teaching from the radical monopoly that has driven the rapid, global, and largely unquestioned spread of English.

### **The Disutility of English**

Let's revisit for a moment the case of David, the Colombian high school student: for him English is imposed in his school curriculum under the logic that it delivers individual benefits for oneself (that is to say, because English is treated as a valuable human resource). Learning English means getting a better job which means a better income which means a better quality of life. And yet, when we shift to ask why English for this *particular* Colombian high school student, for whom there may be little promise of employment by a transnational corporation or international travel (except for, perhaps, the lure of migration to English-speaking North America) these justifications may carry little or no meaning; it becomes clear that for every individual benefit that any particular individual accrues through learning English, there will always be at least one other

individual for whom that individual benefit must be denied. In this sense, education for the purpose of conferring individual benefits, in this case the benefits of learning English as a national or international language, becomes fundamentally a practice of *enclosure*—the conversion of a commonly held good (here, vernacularly produced language) into an individually earned and owned benefit (here, institutionally regulated, standardized language). In the context of the global spread of English for the Colombian student and other youth in the global South including immigrant youth from the global South to the United States, teaching English therefore becomes, in effect, a pernicious means of social sorting and institutional justification for the ongoing inequalities of our present era based largely on race and nationality (Illich, 1971 offers an in-depth discussion of compulsory schooling as institutional justification for inequality). Ever since the Colombian teacher of English had posed her question to me, it has been one of the fundamental professional questions with which I have grappled, and one, I believe, with which any emerging or practicing teacher of English and ESL teacher educator must grapple. How do English language teachers who are concerned with the inequalities inherent in our present educational system, overcome the gatekeeping functions of English, when the issue is *not* that of broadening access to English, but rather rethinking the entire project of English and how it has become deeply embedded in the neo-liberal regime of privatization and enclosure? For such re-thinking, Illich’s conceptualizations of “language”, “need” and “scarcity” become critical.

Illich’s theory of language, taken seriously, raises a number of fundamental and troubling questions for professional language teachers. In numerous essays, Illich (1978/1992, 1981/2013, 2010) has traced genealogically origins of the language teaching



profession to the work of Antonio de Nebrija (1441-1522), and his offer to Queen Isabella of his Spanish grammar as an instrument of her empire; for Illich, this turn toward language as a tool for “control in the name of the Queen over the everyday speech of all her people” (p. 31) in the form of a mother tongue defined and policed by grammarians (themselves authorized by ruling elites), was the first successful move to subject vernaculars, which had been held in common by local communities for centuries, to the logic of enclosure. For Illich (1978/1992) any taught language, especially a “taught mother tongue” was a means of alienating people from a convivial tool—their home vernacular language-- that they naturally acquire without any institutional mediation at all. Illich’s notion of vernacular language (1981/2013) had anticipated later translingual scholarship which has questioned whether languages as distinct, bounded entities *exist* at all (Pennycook, 2010; Makoni & Pennycook, 2005); in a 1981 essay, Illich describes what would later be called the “translingual” nature of medieval European vernaculars existing on continua, with intelligibility largely an issue of geographical proximity between villages, and vernacular language identities as “peoplish” (Illich 1981/2013), which is to say that people identified their language as the language the people they knew spoke. It was in this translingual environment of medieval Europe that Nebrija’s Spanish grammar worked as a potent tool of empire and a profound expression of linguistic violence against the people’s vernaculars.

The term “vernacular” and what Illich means when he refers to it is critical here. Illich (1973) suggests that the term “vernacular” is far richer (and refers to a distinctly different phenomenon) than simply “mother tongue.” Tracing the concept of the vernacular to the Roman scholar Varro, Illich stipulates that *vernacular* goes beyond

language: vernacular, whether referencing vernacular tools, vernacular cooking, or vernacular language, refers to any locally developed and locally relevant means of meeting one's (local) necessities for living. Vernacular language therefore is not only the mode of communicating with family members and one's community, but also a means of binding together families and communities in a shared bond of linguistic identity. Vernacular practices are quintessentially convivial. Just as globalized, industrialized English can be characterized by its centrifugal force to spread and colonize new communities (see below), vernacular language has a built-in centripetal force that both binds a local community together and sustains their language practices.

The centuries following Nebrija and Columbus (whose contemporariness is not insignificant) have been an era of increasing enclosure of all manner of commons through what Illich terms the "war on subsistence" (Illich, 1981/2013), including the targeting of vernacular language by Nebrija and the birth of a teaching profession that his ideas had spawned. Vernacular and home languages become dangerous in this era because they undermine the rights of institutions to lay claim to what is otherwise (and rather obviously) the innately productive faculty of human beings to create language. Nebrija and the heirs to his grammarian legacy lay claim to the right to teach each person their own "mother tongue", and to do so, have been obliged for the last five centuries to stigmatize vernacular speech and expression in the service of an *imperial* (and since the "second watershed", an *industrial*) language, be it English, Spanish or other taught language.

The work of language teachers is enacted in the aftermath of this rift between vernacular and taught language. We see it in the perennial debate over "students' right to

their own language” (CCCC, 1974; Smitherman 1999), in which English compositionists (which is to say, instructors of writing in one’s taught mother tongue) “affirm the students’ right to their own patterns and varieties of language -- the dialects of their nurture or whatever dialects in which they find their own identity and style” (CCCC, 1974). Even as the substance of the resolution affirms students’ home and vernacular speech, it can also be read as the acknowledgement by teaching professionals of not only the reality of positional institutional power to marginalize and diminish the worth of a students’ use of home or vernacular language, but also the power to return that “right” back to speakers. The debate itself over the issue of the role of home and vernacular language is evidence of the alienation from one’s own language that has been imposed by centuries of language teachers teaching a “taught mother tongue”.

It is out of this profound alienation from one’s own language that language becomes reconstructed as a *need* (Illich, 2010) which requires satisfaction in a form that can only be delivered by a trained, professionalized and credentialed teacher. To understand how language can become a need, subject to the regime of scarcity, it is important to understand the specific conceptualization of “needs” and “needy man” (*sic*) that has been fundamental in the social critique of Illich and others in the post-development school (Esteva, 2010; Esteva, Stuchul, & Prakash, 2005; Illich, 2010; Illich, 1981/2013; Sachs, 2010). While subsistence societies have always been obliged to live amid the reality of “necessities” for their survival and continuation, it has been the post-war phenomenon of “development” and “underdevelopment”, in which subsistence-based communities are ascribed exogenic “needs”, the need for a flush toilet for example, that differed from the cultural necessities that had from time immemorial been part of their

vernacular way of being (Illich, 2010). “Needs” unlike necessities, are ways of consumption that defined a “universal human” (Illich’s *homo economicus*) whereas necessities were always invariably local and particular matters of particular people in particular places. For Illich the scope of what constitutes “needs” continually grows, unlike necessities which are defined by the limits inherent in an ecosystem or community. Human communication through language is and has always been a human necessity, but it is only when local vernaculars are colonized by the grammarians and textbook writers to become a “taught mother tongue”, that the necessity for communication becomes a “need” for instruction on how to speak or write.

For Illich, the rise of these particular kinds of “needs” was intimately related to what he refers to as the “regime of scarcity”, describing the conditions in modern capitalism: the logic of economics can only become the master narrative of the social world when mediation of social interaction is conducted under the presumption of scarcity. The regime of scarcity becomes therefore the basis for language policing of standard varieties (i.e., the “taught mother tongues” that Illich, 1981/2013 notes), in which the economic value of a privileged language variety can be related to its relative scarcity: those who possess a privileged language variety have an incentive to police its boundaries and engage in gate-keeping to subsidize the value of their own language.

This drives the need for linguistic outsiders to undertake ever-increasing burdens of linguistic “shadow work”, a key Illichian concept that describes the nature of late industrial labor (Illich, 1981/2013). Illich’s shadow work refers to the external labor or payment that becomes a necessary condition to participate in the industrial system of exchange (Illich 1981/2013, 1982). Shadow work is an unmeasured tax on time and

money that is never accounted for in any measures of increasing GDP or other economic measures of development. Housework, noted by Illich, is the prototypical form of shadow work (Illich, 1982) as are the costs of buying, driving, and maintaining an automobile (not to mention the time cost of commuting) as a form “shadow work” that has become nearly obligatory to fully participate in the late industrial system (Illich 1981/2013). Indeed, the very efficiency and efficacy of the late capitalist system depends on a large body of work that must be conducted in the unreported and unmeasured shadow of the economy. That such shadow work falls inequitably on marginalized members of society, particularly women, is a defining feature (Illich, 1982).

Shadow work is not simply any form of unmeasured labor, but particularly “an activity in which people must engage to whatever degree they attempt to satisfy their needs by means of commodities” (Illich, 1982, p 49), an activity which Illich directly contrasts to vernacular modes of subsistence. As the standard variety of English, which closely corresponds to the language of the elite, becomes obligatory in the institutions of the neoliberal, late modern industrial state, the acquisition of the standard language variety (that is to say the “taught mother tongue” variety) becomes a form of shadow work, requiring time, effort and often money to enable someone to participate in the late industrial system; such linguistic shadow work inevitably falls disproportionately on members of the working class, racial and ethnic minorities, and immigrants whose home languages differ substantively from a standard variety. Standard language serves a crucial role in the neo-liberal economy as a radical monopoly that constrains or even disallows a role for local, meaningfully produced and maintained vernaculars, much in the same way that the medical institutions in the second watershed have disallowed the practices of

traditional healers, and transportation institutions constrain walking. Folk healing practices and walking under one's own power are generally unimpacted by the regime of scarcity and need not create customers or consumers for the neo-liberal economy as do modern hospitals and automotive highways; thus, they present a dangerous alternative to an increasingly precarious neo-liberal economy. Likewise, vernacular languages and varieties, not subject to the regime of scarcity as standard, taught varieties are, may be learned without intervention from paid professionals; I suggest this is why in an neo-liberal language ideology, vernacular varieties become dangerous and must be stigmatized and excluded from valid use in schools and workplaces.

### **Toward Language-as-Commons**

In light of the likely increasing disutility of English, English language teachers may begin to question the very “need” for English that has come to be taken for granted across the world and what the implications are for teaching and learning language under a fallacious assumption of scarcity. By asserting that English (and by extension the English language teaching profession) does not hold a privileged position of satisfying a universal need, we, as English language teachers and teacher educators, do not undermine our work as much as we become forced to articulate a new basis for our work—one in which an orientation toward language does not assume language to be a *resource* to be exploited, as much as it is a *commons* that can support convivial life amid a new

“multiple balance” (Illich, 1973), in which human individuals use, but are not used by, their tools and technology.

An “orientation” toward language, as framed by Ruiz (1984), among others, is a “complex of dispositions ... toward languages and their role in society [which] delimit[s] the ways we talk about language and language issues [and] determine[s] the basic questions we ask” (p. 16). Proposing alternative orientations toward language is not merely an academic exercise, but serves a pragmatic and instrumental purpose in shifting the paradigmatic assumptions that guide decisions of policy (Ruiz, 1984), as well as inform pedagogical practices, in the sense of influencing local school and classroom policy for using and understanding language (Hult & Hornberger, 2016). Ruiz (1984) advocates for a “repertoire of orientations” (p 18) to be more responsive to a range of contexts and changing a social environment. In the same vein therefore, I propose an outline of the dispositions toward language that constitute an alternative “language-as-commons” (LaC) orientation. Considering, as Ruiz (1984) suggests, that an orientation repertoire is needed to address specific contexts for language use, learning, and teaching, in this particular moment characterized by crises of sustainability in the “second watershed”, articulating an LaC orientation is particularly pressing in order to re-emphasize a respect for limits in the spread of English, allow for language to be taught and learned as a convivial tool, and more directly integrate translingual practice into how language is taught and learned.

I propose an alternate “language-as-commons” orientation to language, informed by the social critique of Illich and his vision of conviviality, can be characterized by the following dispositions and implications:

- Language is an indispensable and unalienable part of human life; all human beings have the innate ability to learn and use language that is relevant to the conditions of their life.
- Languages (as discrete, bounded, named and stable entities) reflect historical and political developments, more than fundamental linguistic differences.
- Language varieties cannot be “owned” by any particular communities or groups; language norms arise from local, community-based vernacular practices.
- Standard language varieties reflect a radical monopoly over communication that marginalizes vernacular modes of language use; convivial, vernacular modes of communication should be respected and encouraged.
- The persistence of standardized, capitalized, and institutionally-policed language varieties serve the goals of state, institutional, and industrial actors, rather than the interests of learners. The interests of members of local communities should take precedence over the needs of the state or the industrial system.



- Language learning is not a “need” to be satisfied; the acquisition of standardized language codes beyond one’s home/vernacular language should not be treated as obligatory for a meaningful life of dignity.
- Professional language teachers are not indispensable to language learning, when language learning is defined as the acquisition of local, vernacular, community-based practices. Language teachers may play a role in coordinating and facilitating meaningful, convivial language practices for language learners.
- Translingualism naturally arises from convivial, vernacular use of language. Language learning environments should assume translingualism and translanguaging as the norm, including the incorporation of vernacular language into translingual practices and pedagogies.

This framework for a new orientation toward language is not unprecedented and reflects the emerging translingual turn toward language and language teaching over the last decade. For example, documentation of historical and contemporary translingual practices in India (Canagarajah, 2013b) as well as the historical record of translingualism among the non-elite in medieval Europe (Illich 1981/2013) both offer important insight into how language has and can continue to operate governed by principles of the commons. For example, Canagarajah’s (2013b) description of the translingual practice in South India called *manipravala* provides a clear example of convivial language diversity in the linguistically rich and diverse setting of South Asia before colonialization,

including the widespread use of elite, high status language such as Sanskrit in ways that did not restrict or marginalize the use of vernacular codes. Under the language ideology of South Asian *manipravala* there was not a sense of language “ownership”, neither restricting the legitimate use of a language code to a particular group nor restricting an individual to one legitimate language code. Contrast this to the idea of “ownership” of a language in the contemporary English language teaching paradigm, which has been debated at least since Widdowson (1994). To the degree to which Widdowson’s (1994) thesis that English should no longer be considered as legitimately “owned” by native speakers has been broadly taken up in the work of teaching ESL/EFL (see for example, Davies, 2003; Norton, 1997), it is possible to observe already emerging dispositions in a “language-as-commons” orientation, in which English is rightfully owned by all (or rather owned by none). Likewise, the turn toward translanguaging and translingual pedagogies in the teaching of language minority students (Garcia, 2011; Garcia & Wei, 2014, Canagarajah, 2013a, 2013b) may be reflective of an emerging commons in language teaching and learning (although it remains important to be vigilant toward the possibility that the translingual turn itself may become co-opted by the neoliberal regime as a means of privatization of lifelong language learning, see here Flores, 2013).

Nationalist language ideologies that have emerged in Western society have raised alarm at the abdication of “ownership of language”, fearing that loss of linguistic purity and clearly maintained language boundaries leads inevitably to social breakdown and loss of cultural and national cohesion (Weber, 2015). Even though this does not reflect a consensus view in the scholarship of applied linguistic or teaching ESL, it may be worth asking whether the widely cited “tragedy of the commons” (Hardin, 1968) may in fact

apply to language. In other words, is there a danger in moving toward a vision of language in which language is no longer treated as a stable, discrete, enclosed, privatized and policed social good?

In my own experience teaching pre-service and in-service teachers in translingual and translanguaging pedagogies, I have heard a frequently expressed concern that failing to regulate language on the basis of a standard, monolingual English norm, opens the door to translingual practices that will lead to a downward spiral of lowered standards, and the inability to ensure mutual intelligibility between speakers who no longer share a single, standard language code. While such concerns are unfounded, they are not unreasonable; fundamentally, these teachers are asking the question of what happens to language when it is no longer subject to the privatized and policed “enclosure” of standardized language standards. Such concerns mirror Hardin’s (1968) classic case of the “tragedy of the commons”, which presents the false choice between the private enclosure through policed ownership or public degradation that follows from unregulated commons. In regulating either the number of livestock to graze on a village green (in Hardin, 1968, for example) or to regulate the standardized use of a language, we face the double-bind of either overwhelming the carrying capacity of a system (either linguistic or environmental) or acceding to centralization of control (Orr, 1992). The impact of this double-bind falls inequitably on those who have lived as commoners: peasants, *campesinos*, those who live by their own subsistence and work with vernacular tools, including language. For them, “privatization” implies its original Latin roots, *privatus* “to deprive or rob” (Shiva, 2010). Rather than appeal to the practice of enclosure and privatization in response to concerns about unregulated linguistic or environmental

commons, we must recognize that commons *are* regulated (Ostrom, 1990). Likewise, a translingual language commons is not unregulated, albeit regulated in service of the necessities of the local community, but *not regulated* in service of maximizing efficiency of instruction, schooling, and the industrial economy.

On what basis can members of local communities (whether a vernacular language community or a classroom) regulate their language commons? Language policy decisions must be made in light of what Illich (1973) calls the “multiple balance” that can re-orient human lives toward conviviality, amid the crises that arise in an increasingly unstable social structure. In particular, “the rising cost of fitting man (sic) to the service of his tools” (p. 46), including and especially English, cannot be perpetually maintained; instead human beings must begin to work to restore a balance of conviviality amid a highly programmed, institutionalized, and standardized world. One self-regulating principle of a language commons, therefore, must be to accept that “tools [such as English] foster conviviality to the extent that they can be used by anybody as often or as seldom as desired for the accomplishment of a purpose chosen by the user” (Illich, 1973, p 22). As language teachers, it is incumbent to embrace “as seldom” as much as “as often” to strive to undo the pernicious effects of English’s (and other standard languages’) radical monopoly. As Illich (1973) indicates, “a convivial society would be the result of social arrangements that guarantee for each member the most ample and free access to tools of the community and limit this freedom only in favor of another member’s freedom [to not use those tools]” (p. 12). As a profession we need to re-envision a rationale for bringing English into the world that re-asserts a balance between open access to English and obligatory English. Learners must be inducted into a critical

stance toward their own learning, recognizing that insofar as when English is being taught and learned as a non-convivial tool whose use and spread obliges more use and wider spread, it works to exclude and impute a need to others, like David and Josie's ELL student. We need to communicate clearly to our students the *costs* of learning English, as the institution of English remains closely tied to the larger project of neo-liberalization and the regime of scarcity. The work of English language teaching is inherently unsustainable when the spread of English creates a need that only further spread of English can satisfy.

In working to make sense of how English language teachers can take up this LaC orientation toward our teaching practices, which requires us to embrace limits to the growth of English and a limit on the role of the professional, credentialed language teacher, it is incumbent to recognize, as Illich (1973) does, that the most important changes must come from individual commitments to a more just, convivial, sustainable future:

People must learn to live within bounds. This cannot be *taught*. Survival depends on people *learning* fast what they *cannot* do. They must *learn* to abstain from unlimited... consumption and use. It is impossible to *educate* people for voluntary poverty or to manipulate them into self-control. It is impossible to *teach* joyful renunciation in a world totally structured for higher output and the illusion of declining costs. (p 65, emphasis in original)

What I suggest Illich is saying here, which is particularly relevant for the broader acceptance of a commons-based pedagogy for English language teaching and learning, is that any kind of substantive professional development and growth for emerging language

teachers must be focused on the individuals and teachers themselves, their emerging teacher knowledge and how they use that teacher knowledge to grapple with their own complicity in an economic system built to generate unlimited growth and consumption, including growth and consumption of capitalized, standardized language. In the subsequent chapters, I look closely at Josie, the pre-service teacher in one of the “moments” at the start of this chapter, to understand her emerging teacher knowledge and how that knowledge obliges her (or not) to grapple with some of these issues of ethical responsibility in the present era of crises.

Mark’s question remains apt: “Are you saying that teaching English is a bad thing?” I may rephrase this question in terms of Josie: Is her future teaching practice, the work that I have helped prepare her to do, *counterproductive*, in the words of Illich? If I fail, or Josie fails, to acknowledge and renounce our profession’s complicity in maintaining the social traps presented by the institutionalization and commodification of language, then I am obliged to answer Mark in the affirmative.

The challenge here, then, as ESL educators and teacher educators, is to move our field toward a re-imagining of cultural values necessary for equity, conviviality, and long-term sustainability of humankind on the planet, when the very nature of that cultural and educational change cannot be “educated” into people. Insofar as an alternate orientation toward language and language teaching can permit us to talk in new ways about language, ask new questions, and come to new conclusions about our work and professional obligations (Ruiz, 1984), then this present work aims to initiate those conversations and questions, which, given the ongoing crises in our ‘second watershed’ will only become more pressing.

#### *Chapter 4:*

### ***“Solving for Pattern”: A Methodology for Narrative Inquiry into Teacher Knowledge on Language as Commons***

In his 1981 essay, “Solving for Pattern”, Wendell Berry lays out several dilemmas of counterproductivity in contemporary agriculture that closely mirror the concerns that Illich discusses in the realms of transportation, education, and medicine: that the so-called solutions to problems of agricultural production in the industrial era multiply the original problem, creating a “hellish symbiosis in which problem and solution reciprocally enlarge one another” (Berry, 1981, para 7). For example, a farmer working in the industrial era might address ever increasing soil compaction by using ever larger tractors to till, which causes increasing soil compaction. While I am unaware of extent to which Berry had read Illich (or Illich had read Berry), it is evident that both writers put this issue of *counterproductivity* at the center of any debate on how to extricate human beings from the social traps of late modernity that continue to hurl us toward an unsustainable future.

I note the Berry essay here to begin my methodology section because Berry continues by suggesting that a good solution to the modern dilemma of counterproductivity in agriculture would be one that does not solve for a *single* purpose or goal (such as maximizing yield) but works in harmony amid the broader system, for example, as complementary parts of a natural ecosystem or an organ within the body. However, Berry warns “it would be next to useless, of course, to talk about the possibilities of good solutions if none existed in proof and practice” (Berry, 1981, para

13), and he proceeds to describe the work of one specific farmer, Earl Spencer, who had in his own farming made decisions based on the health of the ecological system that he was managing, rather than following conventional wisdom on how to maximize yield and profit. Berry sketches a brief but telling ten-year narrative of Spencer's decisions, challenges, actions, and ultimately his outcomes. This narrative, along with other rich observations of both responsive and destructive farming practices, informed for Berry (1981) a set of critical, if provisional, standards for identifying "good solutions" for the dilemmas of agricultural production that do not worsen, multiply or relocate the original problems. It is an illustrative example, I suggest, of the kind of "honest bookkeeping" (Orr, 1992, p 5) that is needed amid our present crises. While some of Berry's (1981) standards are immanently relevant for this project of addressing "language problems" in the teaching of English, and others of Berry are more specific to the practice of farming, what is important here is the methodological direction that Berry's (1981) work suggests: that we start as the basis for defining and promoting "good solutions" with what is actually being done and the kinds of lived knowledge (as a farmer or as a teacher) that informs those decisions being made. Teachers, like farmers, work amid conditions in which situatedness is paramount and uncertainty always present: both teachers and farmers have to understand their work as occurring in particular places with particular climates, ecologies, and histories. Knowledge about teaching and farming is always going to be built bottom-up, from real lives in practice, whether it is from Earl Spencer's work with his cattle herd, or Josie's practice in linguistically diverse classrooms.

While the general question that I pose in this project is how we as profession can move toward a "language-as-commons" (LaC) orientation, the particular focus of these



next two chapters looks at how one specific pre-service teacher, Josie, has drawn on her own teacher (and learner) knowledge to make decisions for what she believes are “good solutions”, and how Josie’s teacher knowledge accounts for (or does not account for) a “language-as-commons” orientation in these provisional “good solutions”. Drawing on interview and observational data of Josie collected from January 2018 through February 2019, I hope to demonstrate what some of these decisions around a LaC orientation might look like “in proof and practice” (Berry, 1981), and contribute to ongoing inquiry into the kinds of educative experiences that would allow Josie and other pre-service teachers to engage in and draw on this re-imagination of language as a commons as they make professional decisions in their teaching practice. In this case, the inquiry into Josie and her teacher knowledge is positioned within the broad category of a narrative approach to qualitative analysis (Casey, 1996). Specifically, I draw on the narrative inquiry tradition informed by Clandinin (2013), Clandinin & Connelly (2000), and Connelly & Clandinin (1990), to provide a heuristic for constructing a meaningful narrative of Josie’s experience, which I explain further below.

Josie is a third-year early elementary education student who completed her Pennsylvania ESL Program Specialist Endorsement through participating in the Ecuador immersion program (see below). She is binational (US and S. Korea) and multilingual (English, Korean, Chinese, Spanish). US-born, she learned English as an additional language and had been designated as an English learner in school. She expects to complete her degree program early and return to her family, at least temporarily, who live in Korea. I share this background here because I want to stipulate that I don’t present Josie’s case as representative or emblematic of how all or most pre-service teachers

would engage with a commons-based approach to language; rather, Josie's is one case that illustrates the challenges that are inherent in re-imagining ESL teacher preparation in order to reject and resist the complicity of the TESOL field in the present crises of sustainability in the neo-liberal era. My goal in this component of the overall project is to provide a picture of a *real* teacher-candidate—one who is committed to her teaching and committed to her students and cognizant of pervasive injustice, yet also situated in the real world and forced to sort out how to make the best choices amid social and structural constraints.

While I introduce Josie in detail in the subsequent chapter, it is worth explaining here why I chose to investigate and narrate this one pre-service teacher's experience. In particular, I chose to look closely at Josie's story not because Josie identifies as bringing a high level of environmental consciousness, but rather because she doesn't. Josie, like many of the pre-service teachers who have chosen to go into the field of teaching ESL, is deeply committed to the well-being of her students, but is pulled in a million different directions when they consider all of the different ways the world they work in needs to be changed, and what they need to do about it—taking very seriously their role as a teacher to address issues of racism, anti-immigration sentiment, unequal school funding, and the marginalization of English learner students, not to mention the challenges of effectively teaching both language and content to their linguistically diverse students (see Katunich, in press, as an earlier study of pre-service teachers who were attempting to integrate some sense of sustainability literacy into a broader set of values and commitments around equity, excellence in teaching, and professional responsibility). All of these challenges can seem to be much more directly relevant to teaching ELLs for Josie and her

classmates than the issues of climate change or economic neo-liberalization. Like many of the pre-service teachers I have had the opportunity of working with Josie *cares* but at no point has Josie ever solely focused that care on issues that she would call sustainability, climate change, or other environmental issues. By choosing Josie’s story, I imagine that her story will shed light on what may appear to be the impossibility of the task of preparing ESL teachers to consider sustainability issues as central to their professional identities. By choosing her story and looking closely at how she sees her professional practice, I hope to discover whether there may be some prospect for a language-as-commons approach to align with Josie’s broader pedagogical priorities, including especially translingual approaches to language learning and teaching.

In other words, the narrative approach I adopt here to make sense of and share Josie’s story is not meant to generalize in any way to pre-service ESL teachers as a whole. Rather, Josie’s story is meant to explore the contours of possibility—“in proof and practice” (Berry, 1981)-- when we ask emerging ESL teachers to broaden their notion of good teaching practice to include “solving for pattern” (Berry, 1981) amid the present crises of sustainability. Throughout this project, I bring my own genuine question that asks (as I believe Illich would ask) whether it is possible at all to teach English as a commons, given the imperial, industrial, neo-liberal, and hegemonic character and history of the language. Thus, in that sense, this project is not only about Josie, but also about me, and how I make sense of my own work as a language teacher and language teacher educator, and how I have discharged my own ethical responsibilities.

## Method/ology

In order to achieve these ends—exploring how Josie makes sense of and works toward the possibility of implementing a “language-as-commons, as well as my own questioning about the commons in my own teaching—I suggest that a narrative inquiry approach is uniquely suited. Specifically, I draw on the narrative inquiry tradition that has been informed by Clandinin (2013), Phillion (2002), Clandinin & Connelly (2000), and Connelly & Clandinin (1990), to provide a heuristic for the constructing of meaningful narratives of pre-service teachers’ experiences. Narrative inquiry is one specific approach to knowing that is situated among a broader set of narrative-based approaches to qualitative research (Casey, 1996). Polkinghorne (1996) admits that what it means to adopt a narrative approach to research can be equivocal, referring to either prose description in the most general sense, or more particularly, stories of human experience. Across a range of narrative-based research (cf. Polkinghorne, 1988; Polkinghorne, 1996; Clandinin, 2013), there remains a key distinction between *analysis of narrative*, a methodology that takes narrative as a phenomenon to be categorized into themes and patterns; and *narrative analysis*, an approach that views narrative as a method of analyzing of human events. Largely, the work that I have been reading falls into the latter category, in which narrative is the *method*, but also the phenomenon of interest, as well as the result of inquiry itself (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Xu & Connelly, 2009).

Such narrative approaches are characterized by their interest in *stories*, on the basis that human beings are story-telling beings, and that human experience is embodied in narrative story (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Broadly speaking, narrative approaches

offer to problematize the kind of *paradigmatic* knowledge that has arisen from traditional, positivist research methodologies that generated variables and categories, arranging them in frameworks to test, and then generalize (Polkinghorne, 1988; Polkinghorne, 1995). In contrast to *paradigmatic* knowledge, narrative ways of knowing can illuminate the complexity within human categories, which has conventionally been the interest of human sciences such as anthropology and history. In this way, narrative approaches borrow from and share the methodological stance of the ethnographer, and challenge of the positionality of the researcher as a privileged expert. Compared to other forms of qualitative and quantitative research oriented around paradigmatic knowing and focused on “extracting” data from subjects, I would argue that narrative approaches are more ethical, in particular because narrative ways of knowing reflect an epistemology that privileges the local and works in service of the kinds of convivial practices that I am advocating as a new guiding principle in teaching and the preparation of English language teachers.

Kissling (2012) in his narrative inquiry of teachers, makes an important distinction between “method” and “methodology”: whereas the method is a description of a way of doing something—teaching, research, farming, etc., the methodology is the contextualization of the method that puts thought to how and why any particular method is used. Pragmatically, both teachers and researchers may look for “method” as the touchstone for best practices in effective teaching or study replication. However, methodology as the contextualization of the thought informing method is particularly important in a project such as a narrative inquiry. Hence the “slash” in title of this

section (“Method/ology”) directs the reader to keep both the method and the contextualization of the thought underlying the method in mind.

In this case, the narrative inquiry “method/ology” described by Jean Clandinin and Michael Connelly (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clandinin, 2013) is grounded in a Deweyan pragmatic philosophical stance, one that centers on participants’ experience itself (Dewey, 1938). I suggest that what constitutes *experience* remains an open phenomenological question, and in this inquiry, I make a choice to follow the stance of Husserl (2006/1911) who states

Everyone has the right, to assert what is experienced. Nevertheless, everyone knows that what is experienced “may not really be the case.” On the other hand, the statements that we have made in describing the givenness of... experience do make the claim to absolute evidence. It is undoubtedly true that we find such a thing [in our experience].

Thus, even as it is clear that experience cannot offer a claim to perfect or infallible understanding, the “givenness” of experience—that experience is something that is – becomes the epistemological basis for interpreting and constructing narrative. I suggest such attention on *structured experience* and its *givenness* is particularly apt in the context of the studying emerging teachers in a cultural immersion abroad, in which the experience itself is bound to a particular time and place, yet the interpretative space for how this emerging teacher makes sense of and structures her experience remains quite open (and indeed, reflection on such sense-making and structuring of experience is a key dimension of the program goals).

In adopting a narrative inquiry approach (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990), I invited Josie over a period of one year to discuss

her lived experiences before, during and after their time in Ecuador, not just as stories, but as a method of illuminating and constructing a *structured experience*. To this end, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) draw on Deweyian philosophy that offers a “three-dimensional narrative inquiry space” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 12; Xu & Connelly, p 223) from Dewey’s understanding continuity and interaction as the constituent criteria of experience (Dewey, 1938, 44) along with an emergent third consideration of place (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, 50-51; Kissling, 2012, 2014).

This present work is informed by a small body of narrative inquiry that has set out to understand the experiences of teachers of ELLs, such as Liu & Xu (2011), Phillion (2002), and Tsui (2007). Such projects have storied how emerging teachers negotiate status or identity between a traditional, familiar or comfortable worldview, and a new, changing or challenging one. Tsui (2007), for example, describes her narrative subject Minfeng’s story of becoming an English teacher in China despite his alienation from and deep-felt resistance to the dominant, Western-oriented models of language teaching such as CLT (Communicative Language Teaching). Similarly, Lui & Xu (2011) make use of narrative inquiry to capture the experience of English teachers in China who are forced to make sense of teaching reforms in their institution which feed a tension between received, traditional pedagogy and new liberal approaches. In both of these cases, we can observe what Song (2016) describes as “the shifting teaching context via globalization [that] generates new demands for English teachers” (p. 631), and narrative inquiry appears particularly suited to mapping how teachers (including pre-service and early career ESL teachers) make sense of their professional practices amid such shifting contexts. I suggest that the present mounting crises of sustainability, from climate change

to linguistic loss to the global refugee crisis, represent an additional kind of shifting teaching contexts in which narrative inquiry approaches can capture the sense-making of teachers experiencing it. In the same way as Tsui (2007) and Lui & Xu (2011), Josie's narrative that I construct and share here shows one emerging teacher navigating her professional identity and teacher knowledge amid the pressing forces of climate change and a neo-liberal economic system that shapes (only sometimes consciously) her sense of self as a teacher.

Phillion (2002) offers a particularly important touchstone for the kind of narrative work I conduct here. Based on her experience over two years in a school collaborating with "Pam", a black immigrant teacher working in a linguistically and culturally diverse classroom and school, Phillion, herself a white researcher, constructs narratives of Pam, her classroom and her school; in doing so, Phillion directly confronts her readers with the complexity and contradiction in those narratives. She speaks *to* the reader here in following quote from the prologue, as well as throughout the book:

I invite you, the reader to travel with me through this work, to bring your experiences, your insights, your intuition, your imagination, to actively join with me in interpretation in this inquiry. It is my hope that in reading this work you will not distance yourself, but, rather, you will join me in these experiences, share my passions and my puzzles, wonder with me, feel the dilemmas that I experienced in my research (p. xviii).

These narratives Phillion (2002) shares, which she would call often puzzling or messy, open up questions that may go unasked in more conventional research approaches: Who holds power to write others' narratives? Who is a participant? Who is the "subject"? How do these questions get asked and answered differently when working across power differences, whether those differences are a university researcher-



classroom teacher difference, a racial difference, or a student-instructor difference? In part, my own methodological choices in this project have been informed by Phillion's (2002) messy (and ultimately unresolved) questions about the possibilities and limitations for ethical use of others' narratives in service of a coherence that is being sought by the researcher him or herself.

Phillion (2002) also privileges the autobiographical roots of narrative inquiry and includes an entire chapter to this. Readers in the subsequent chapters of this project will encounter not only the narrative of Josie's learning to teach, but my own narrative of learning to teach, learning to prepare teachers, and even, I suggest, my learning how to engage in this kind of research. Allowing space for autobiographical narrative in this inquiry comes in part from observing how Phillion (2002), as well as other scholars who have worked from a narrative perspective (such as He, 2003; Connolly & Clandinin, 2000), have refused to hide behind an authorial, authoritative, omniscient, and invisible researcher persona; the self who is hearing and seeing the narrative is as much a part of the narrative as the speaker. I am present in this work. My own positionality growing up working class in western Pennsylvania, in the shadow of a surface coal mine, presently feeling deeply anxious about the prospects how human activity will impact my own children amid the second watershed, yet at the same time professionally bound to a profoundly imperialist and commodified field of English language teaching, as well as working for an international immersion program that by its existence requires literally tons of CO2 emissions: these are the contradictions that are central to making sense of my reading of Josie and the meaning I aim to construct from what she has shared with me.

Narrative inquiry offers a methodology to understand about how teachers strive (or do not strive) to reconcile competing and perhaps contradictory ideologies and shifting worldviews, such as the dominant neoliberal worldview that pre-service teachers have grown up in and the emerging prospects of a commons-based, convivial worldview that may be deeply uncomfortable and foreign to those of us growing up in a world in which the neoliberal logic of the market has never been really questioned. Narrative inquiry, unlike other forms of research designed for paradigmatic, generalizable knowledge, allows for teachers and teacher educators to get at the kind of question Brumfit (2006) poses: “What then do we do?”, insofar as narrative inquiry moves us beyond strictly considering “knowledge-for-teachers” to shift our attention to “teacher knowledge” (Xu & Connelly, 2009), which describes the shift from preparing teachers to be subject-area experts (that is to say, for language teachers, experts in the structure and use of a target language, and the knowledge of a curriculum) to equipping teachers to “know themselves and their professional work situations... referenc[ing] the totality of a person’s personal practical knowledge gained from formal and informal educational experience” (Xu & Connelly, 2009, p 221). This “totality of [pre-service teachers’] personal practical knowledge” is what this project gets at for one preservice teacher-- Josie—in particular her emerging teacher knowledge of sustainability literacy, language-as-commons, and English language teaching practices. I want to note here that throughout the narrative inquiry I aim to connect, where relevant, Josie’s emerging “personal practical knowledge” to the kinds of principles identified in the previous chapter that I suggest may reflect a “language-as-common” orientation; this is not to suggest however, a methodological choice to use an LaC as an *a priori* interpretative lens

to make sense of Josie’s experience as part of a thematic analysis. Rather, in the spirit of a narrative inquiry, I try as wholeheartedly as possible to describe Josie’s experience in her own terms; what I do with that emerging narrative is to put it in a dialogue with LaC principles that may reflect more convivial and sustainable ways of teaching language. In some cases, Josie’s narrative maps closely to LaC principles, either closely adopting them or overtly rejecting them; in other parts, Josie’s narrative suggests ways in which an LaC orientation remains an incomplete way to explain Josie’s own “personal practical knowledge” of teaching.

In the remainder of this chapter, I wish to set the reader’s capacity to “join with me in interpretation in this inquiry” (Phillion, 2002, p xviii) by offering contextualization for the teaching and research I did with Josie, including a description of the ESL Certificate Program with Ecuador Immersion that Josie completed and through which I worked closely with Josie over the year. The Ecuador program also included, unlike other learning and teaching experiences that Josie had been having over the year, a more explicit sustainability literacy curriculum, which I describe here. Following this contextualization, I provide a description of the procedure I used to collect “data” and organize it into narrative in the subsequent chapter. This is followed by a description of the ethical considerations that informed the entire inquiry, in particular ethical considerations around the prospects in a narrative inquiry of mis-appropriation of a research participants story and voice, amid the agenda that a researcher consciously or subconsciously brings to the interpretive move. Because of these potential concerns, I conclude this chapter with an autobiographical narrative, in the tradition of Phillion (2002), of the personal stakes that I bring to this inquiry and the basis of my own lived

teacher knowledge around the present crises of sustainability and the prospects for re-imagining language as commons.

## **Setting**

This inquiry followed Josie over a period of one year of her professional preparation to become a teacher, in particular, her preparation to be credentialed as an ESL program specialist, which she completed as part of the ESL Certificate Program with Ecuador Immersion in the summer of 2018, in which I worked closely with her. While Josie had throughout the year a number of other formative experiences that profoundly shaped her teacher knowledge and identity, including other education coursework in the College of Education at Penn State, pre-student teaching at a local private elementary school, and student teaching at an urban Philadelphia elementary school, it was Josie's participation in the Ecuador program in which as a teacher I worked most closely with Josie, instructing courses during the program in which there were purposively designed elements of a sustainability literacy curriculum, including discussions about commodification of language, the ongoing neo-liberalization of schools and civic life, and the prospects of reclaiming a commons in our language teaching. In this section, I want to provide a fuller description of the immersion program in Ecuador that Josie encountered over the period of this narrative inquiry, as well as the outline of the emerging, infused sustainability curriculum that was part of the program.

The Penn State ESL Certificate Program with Ecuador Immersion is 15-credit, seven-month program that includes weekend class meetings, on-line learning and a five-week immersion experience in Ecuador. The program fulfills Pennsylvania Department of Education requirements for the ESL Program Specialist Endorsement, and while program participants include in-service and practicing professionals, the majority are undergraduates, like Josie, who are emerging (new) professionals in the field of teaching ESL.

The immersion program in Ecuador includes language classes in Spanish or Kichwa (Josie took Spanish), a homestay with Ecuadorian family, three Penn State courses (Methods of Teaching ESL; Language and Culture in the Classroom; Foundations of Language for Language Teaching) and an ESL teaching practicum in which participants design and deliver a content-based instructional unit to Ecuadorian English learners, in collaboration with a teaching partner and teaching mentor. In 2018, the content-based teaching unit was organized around food and food systems, with possible topics including food sustainability, nutrition, and food-related cultural traditions. Ecuadorian students included age-groups that ranged from middle-school to university-age students. In Josie's teaching practicum she was assigned to teach in a classroom of mixed middle-school and high-school aged English learners.

The local site of Ecuador plays a critical role as the context for the learning that happens throughout the program. The program has been offered at different sites in Ecuador (dependent largely on the number of participants and the capacity of our Ecuadorian partner institutions), and in 2018 (the year of Josie participation) the program

was hosted by the *Universidad de Cuenca* in the city of Cuenca, a medium-sized city in the southern Ecuadorian Andes, which is a UNESCO World Heritage site, recognized for, among other things, “vernacular architecture [in the historic center] illustrating the ... organization of space during the colonial period” (UNESCO). In addition, the program organizes weekend excursions to neighboring provinces, including a visit to a community-based cultural tourism project in the Saraguro indigenous community, and one weekend at *Reserva Mazar*, a remote ecological reserve on the eastern slopes of the Andes, where participants engage in service-learning in a reforestation project. Furthermore, Ecuador as a whole, is a *place* that constitutes a fundamental part of the immersion experience curriculum. Ecuador presents a unique history and ecology that offers participants like Josie the opportunity to encounter and reflect on phenomena such as:

- biodiversity, with two identified “biodiversity hotspots” (Myers, Mittermeier, Mittermeier, Gustavo & Kent, 2000), in the tropical Andes and Choco rainforest;
- indigenous cultural and linguistic heritages that have demonstrated resilience in the face of mounting pressure of globalization and the spread of dominant European languages (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006);
- its status as an OPEC member and petroleum exporter, its economic dependence on petroleum revenues, and its history of petroleum-related environmental pollution in the Ecuadorian Amazon by the US multinational energy corporation Chevron;

- a robust discourse on alternatives to the dominant, western neo-liberal economic paradigm, namely through the principle of *sumak kawsay*, a Kichwa-language term that speaks to the priority of well-being, cultural values, and human dignity over the liberalization of economic markets (Radcliffe, 2012; Ramírez-Cendrero, García, & Santillán, 2017).

### **Sustainability Curriculum**

In a 2017 review of the literature, Smolcic & Katunich identify a number of outcomes that have been as a result of participating in a cultural immersion program for teachers; these include developing empathy (Marx & Pray, 2011; Palmer & Menard-Warwick, 2012), attaining more critical consciousness (Nero, 2009; Palmer & Menard-Warwick, 2012; Santamaria, Santamaria, & Fletcher, 2009), and building one's capacity for intercultural engagement and competence (Hamel, Chikamori, Ono, & Williams, 2010). Importantly, we were unable to find published research literature to date that has identified sustainability literacy or ecological consciousness as a specific outcome for immersion programs. This gap in both the research literature (and in the practice of immersion programs) prompted us to begin to integrate from in a more conscious way, starting in 2017, an infused curriculum for sustainability literacy in the Penn State ESL Certificate Program with Ecuador Immersion, drawing initially on Nolet's (2009) nine distinct themes of sustainability literacy for pre-service teachers, which include: *stewardship/care, respect for limits, systems thinking, economic restructuring, social justice and fair distribution, intergenerational perspective, nature as teacher, global citizenship, and importance of place* (p. 422)

While it has been unrealistic to address in any meaningful way all nine of Nolet's (2009) themes in the context of a 15-credit program focused primarily on preparing linguistically responsive teachers of ELLs, there was a commitment to address sustainability literacy in the ways in which current crises of sustainability substantively impact the work of teaching ESL, including:

- Learning about the issue of climate change refugees and migration, through viewing and discussing a short film on out-migration from the Marshall Islands to the US due to sea-level rise. (Milman & Ryan, 2016).
- Introducing a concept of the commons and conviviality (without explicitly referencing the term conviviality or Illich's social critique)—which for many participants was an entirely novel concept.
- Encounters with indigenous knowledge, culture, and language which included a guest lecturer in Ecuador, who presented, among other topics, an introduction to the Kichwa concept of *sumak kawsay*, the study of the Kichwa language, and community-based tourism to the local indigenous community of Saraguro.
- Reflection on root metaphors in the teaching, learning, and use of English, informed by an assigned reading on Chet Bowers' (2012) critique of English language teaching; this also included investigation on how language itself shapes how issues of sustainability can be framed in western, Anglophone cultures.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> This was informed by Halliday's (2003) observation of the way in which count and non-count nouns work in English. Built into the very grammar of English is how material such "oil", "coal", "soil", and "water" are uncountable in the absence of a human measurement (that is to say a "barrel of oil" or "ton of coal"), which affirms a problematic root metaphor that such "resources" are not actually finite.



One of the more impactful learning experiences around issues of sustainability and ecological consciousness may have been a two-day excursion to Reserva Mazar. Mazar is a remote, biodiverse cloud forest ecosystem reserve located in the Andes Highlands approximately 3 hours outside of Cuenca, Ecuador. The excursion to Mazar was included in the program to prompt participants' self-evaluation and reflection about the natural world and the human role in it by incorporating elements of service-learning, with participants spending one morning planting trees in a re-forestation project, as well as providing experiential learning about Mazar's biodiverse ecosystem and the sustainable agriculture on and around the reserve and giving participants the opportunity to work together and build community (in the absence of phone connections and wifi).

Furthermore, the embedded sustainability curriculum connected to the core curriculum in the program on broader topics of language viewed from a social and multilingual perspective. Throughout the entire program students like Josie were prompted to consider integrating translanguaging pedagogies and practices into their language teaching, teaching for bilingualism, recognizing and valuing language variation, and resisting the perpetuation of native speaker bias in the profession. While these may not have appeared on the surface to be part of a sustainability literacy curriculum or included in the curriculum as sustainability related, they clearly relate to the broader language-as-commons orientation discussed here.

Finally, I want to suggest that even the water in Ecuador is curriculum in the Ecuador program, as it suggests ways that we can re-imagine non-human (and post-human) agents as our teachers (see here Nolet, 2009; Pennycook, 2018). Most immediately, is the very first message about Ecuador often given to students upon arrival:

as we drive from the airport in Quito to the hotel we stay in, our students are admonished *not to flush the toilet paper*. Sewer systems in Ecuador are not designed to handle the paper waste from toilets and instead Ecuadorians have the widely understood cultural practice of disposing of used toilet paper in waste baskets next to the toilets, rather than depositing it in the water. For Penn State students this is an intimate and (hopefully) daily reminder of the fundamentally different set of relationships to water and waste that are in place in Ecuador; students learn how water in Ecuador may not always be, at least in the same way that it is in the United States, an industrial commodity which may be more widely used to carry away waste than to sustain life (see also Illich's essay "H2O and the Waters of Forgetfulness", 1992 for a deeper exploration of how water comes to be seen in industrial societies).

## **Procedures**

Josie's narrative, presented in the subsequent chapter, emerged over a period before, during and after Josie's participation in the Ecuador program, in which I met with Josie for sit-down interviews for the purpose of this research, as well through a number of in-class discussions and out-of-class conversations that were not explicitly conducted for the purpose of this study. Josie was part of a cohort of four participants who initially agreed to participate in the study. While all four participants were interviewed, during the data analysis it became clear to me as the researcher that Josie's story brought a complexity and richness to the research question at hand, in that while she was not always explicitly speaking to issues of "language as commons", she did spend a lot time in class, in assignments, and in interviews reflecting on and grappling with questions of

translanguaging, personal (and social) responsibility, and the commodification of language. Thus, as the researcher I decided that it would be particularly promising to focus the narrative inquiry on Josie.

The field texts that formed the basis of the narrative inquiry included transcripts of interviews with Josie discussing her life-story and teaching experiences that happened five times over the course of 12 months, for one hour or longer each time, in February 2018, July 2018, October 2018, and February 2019. The interviews were semi-structured and organized around questions about Josie's learning inside and outside of the immersion program; however, the open-ended qualities of the interview meant that Josie's stories were not always immediately related to specific questions. In most of the interviews, much of the conversation addressed issues and events that may not have been specifically asked for or prompted in the original interview protocol. I also collected and read Josie's assignments that she submitted for the courses in the Ecuador immersion program. I observed Josie's class performance in an online class in spring 2018 as well as her participation in intensive weekend classes five weekends throughout the spring and summer of 2018. Josie was also in daily classes with me during the five-week Ecuador immersion, and I observed her during weekend excursions. I kept an ongoing journal of observations that I made both of Josie and the other study volunteers throughout this time. These materials (four interview transcripts, student writing across two courses, my journal records of observations and informal conversation) constitute the field texts from which I constructed the narrative.

Insofar as narrative is both the phenomenon and the method in narrative inquiry (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) not to mention the product that created as a result of the method, narrative inquiry requires an ongoing creation/re-creation of a narrative whole, in which an inquirer is “conscious of the end as the inquiry begins (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, 7) as well as “adjudicat[ing] between whole and detail at each moment” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990, 7). Indeed, Clandinin and Connelly (1990) assert that this adjudication is built into procedural elements of narrative inquiry in which field notes become the basis of field texts, which are the basis for interim research texts, and later research texts themselves (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990), which become the organizing procedures for a narrative inquiry approach.

In order to interpret and make narrative sense of these field texts, I organized the field texts of Josie’s into a set of interim texts that were reconstructed into a coherent story (as closely as I was able), moving from her childhood to her discussion of her experiences during and after the immersion experience in Ecuador. This is the necessary, if problematic, interpretive move that Clandinin (2013) calls “integrating shards of the broken back into a narrative whole” (p. 47-48). These interim texts were shared with Josie for member-check confirmation in the final interview. This reflects a distinct feature of narrative inquiry in which it is essential to “tell and retell, live and relive the stories” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, cited in Liu and Xu, 2011) as part of the process of data interpretation. The final step of re-telling and re-living the stories came as the interim narrative texts were read by me, the researcher, in which I asked of these texts what these stories told about Josie’s teacher knowledge, a language-as-commons

orientation toward language teaching and learning, and the prospects for a “good solution” (Berry, 1981). Throughout the process of moving from field texts (interview data, course materials, observations) to interim texts (coherent, mutually agreed upon narratives of Josie’s experiences) to research texts (narratives in which my reading and re-telling of Josie’s experience became complicated by exploration of the language commons), I aimed to remain consistent and ethical in my fidelity to the “given-ness” of the lived experience of Josie, following Connelly and Clandinin’s (1990) suggestion that in the work of narrative inquiry, which even as it derives in some cases from the language and methods of fiction, “interpretation [of field and interim texts]... does not make narrative into fiction” (5).

As the narratives were elicited and listened to by me, the researcher, I present myself as a subject in the narrative as well. As He (2003) and Phillion (2002) both do in their seminal narrative inquiry research, I include at the end of this section a short autobiographical narrative to frame my own epistemological and ethical stakes in this project, along with my own presence and commentary on how I make sense of Josie’s story throughout the next chapter. The rationale for a narrative inquiry that is both biographical and autobiographical is that narrative necessarily demands a teller and a listener; Josie and I are both active participants in the narrative construction. It is worth stating explicitly here that I reject the notion of my own role as researcher as somehow objective and impartial.

During the process of reading and annotating the interim texts with my own reflections, both those reflections that emerged in the moment, and those that

presented post hoc, I began to construct the research text that is shared in the next chapter, much like Phillion (2002) presents in her narratives of Pam's story integrated with her own autobiographical narrative of questions, doubts, and confusion. I follow in Phillion's (2002) convention of marking my own reflections (during and post-hoc) in *italics* to bracket them from Josie's narrative; like Phillion (2002), I make use of a longer italicized commentaries following each section to explore the significance of Josie's story to the broader question of the (im)possibility of integrating a language-as-commons approach to teaching ESL.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Given my researcher role in the narrative inquiry as a co-constructor of narrative, one of the foremost goals of this project is to not mis-represent the participant's own experience; while such attention to the fidelity is an issue for any kind of qualitative work, it is perhaps even more so in narrative approaches (Cadman & Brown, 2011), in which decisions on what to include or not include may mean the silencing of marginalized voices and experiences. Recognizing that narratives are co-constructed between researcher and practitioner, such reciprocity between researcher and participant must affirm not only that "it is the practitioner who first tells the story" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 4), but it is also implicit that the researcher is going to be the one who tells it last. Such responsibility for storying the lived experiences of another is not taken lightly, and efforts to engage in member-checking reflect this concern.

Even more problematic, I would argue, is the illusion of shared narrative unity between individual and researcher accounts. I am not convinced that procedures in narrative inquiry like “response communities” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 210) are ever entirely adequate. There is, I believe, a genuine danger in presenting any singular story, in that if presented by one authorized to speak (i.e., the university-based researcher) this story may become paradigmatic, and “acquire” the subjects about whom it is told.

As the researcher in this project, I remain particularly concerned about issues of appropriation and representation, not least because I am a white male researcher working with Josie, a woman of color and student. Michael Connelly’s own work provides what I suggest is a cautionary tale for the dangers of appropriation and mis-representation when he shares his own narrative of working with Ming Fang He, a graduate student of Connelly’s and a Chinese national (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, 51). In trying to illuminate his own practical knowledge informing his teaching and mentoring practice with He, he invokes his own white guilt narrative about a Chinese storekeeper, Long Him, in the rural Canadian town where Connelly grew up, and how Connelly failed as a young person in this small town to understand and appreciate Long Him’s evidently compelling and important life story that brought him to rural Canada.

Embedded in Connelly’s narrative is his own essentialization of Chinese nationality/ ethnicity: both Ming Fang He and Long Him are Chinese, thus they come together as he seeks out some narrative unity. However, in doing so, he manages to reduce both Ming Fang He and Long Him to their ethnicities. Moreover,

doing so on the part of Connelly is an act of astonishing white privilege to speak for Long Him, a person whom he didn't even know well decades earlier. This narrative violence is, I would suspect, unintentional on the part of Connelly; however, the need for narrative unity and meaning oblige him to construct some relationality, even if he does not have legitimate access to that relationality (his claim to Long Him's narrative seems to have long since expired).

For my part, I enter this interpretative work aiming to foreground my own sets of assumptions and privileges that shape how I read Josie's narratives; this kind of ongoing self-reflection and self-critique seems critically necessary in a narrative inquiry approach to ensure the ethical treatment of participants and their stories.

### **The Role of the Researcher**

Even though the following is, ultimately, Josie's story, I (John, the researcher) wish to locate myself narratively in this project: how I came to ask these questions, what has driven me to this place, and where, perhaps, do I want to go with this investigation into convivial English language teaching. I first asked uncomfortable questions about the (un)sustainability of English language teaching in the context of Professor Madhu Prakash's course "Education and Sustainability" in the fall of 2015; my way of entering into that question was initially not from the perspective as a teacher or teacher educator, but rather that question came in large part from the profound ecological anxiety that I had been feeling about the impact of human activity and the inevitable doom that our planet was headed for—be it climate change, resource depletion, loss of habitat and natural



areas, along with a generalized sense of things being “fucked up”. Three and a half years later, now after the election of an overtly racist, sexist, and climate denialist president, we seemed to be hardly less fucked, but rather much more so. Rather than gradually approaching some imagined future of sustainable development, it appears as if our country and planet are now rushing blindly in the opposite direction toward consequences that may be too horrific to fully comprehend (see Wallace-Wells, 2019). More so than as a teacher, it is as a parent that I fear for the future that my children will inherit, yet I remain deeply pessimistic that there remains any opportunity for individual actors like myself and others to affect change at any meaningful scale. This, however, I do not think was not the intent of Madhu’s curriculum: in reading Berry (1990), Orr (1992), and Gandhi (1938), not to mention Illich’s (1971) essay “Rebirth of Epimethean Man”, Madhu’s was a curriculum of hope, which according to Illich (1971) “means trusting faith in the goodness of nature...[for which] survival of the human race depends on its rediscovery” (151-2).

The crisis of our present moment is real and profound, yet often I despair to act; to look away feels be deeply unethical yet, sometimes, the only bearable response. For me, the desire to imagine or effect change carried along it with a deep sense of pessimism of the prospects of any lasting meaningful transformation that may be the result, I suggest, of growing up in rural western Pennsylvania in the shadow (as in a very literal *shadow*) of a surface coal mine, which by the peak of coal commodity prices in 2008, had surrounded my family’s multigenerational homestead. Below is an aerial photo of my childhood and family home in Worthington, Pennsylvania which I shared with the class community in Madhu’s seminar as part of my final presentation of a philosophy of

sustainability in education; in a small but direct way, the act of ecological violence this image shows is emblematic of countless others, including especially the threat of open-pit copper mining in the Intag River valley in Ecuador where for many years we had organized weekend excursions as part of the ESL Certificate Program with Ecuador Immersion.



Figure 3: Aerial photo Worthington, Pennsylvania. John's childhood and family home, on lower left side of image

This ecological violence that I grew up surrounded by had multiple, varied effects on the commons: a large swath of the banks of Buffalo Creek, where my friends and I went trout fishing every spring, became deforested; the well that my family used to supply all our water dried up when the mining company resumed blasting in the mid 00s. Water in particular—the trout stream of Buffalo Creek, and the underground well water of my family home—has always been an endangered commons in my corner of rural western Pennsylvania. Because of the poor quality of my family's well water (which had been worsening over the years), my family had for decades carried our water for drinking from a nearby roadside spring, as late as the 1990s. That roadside spring was a commons—shared for the common good by many neighbors—and it was not uncommon

to see on a summer's evening, people from nearby parked around the spring, gathered to fill jugs and bottles for their drinking water for the week. Such commons persisted until the spring was tested by the county health department and promptly closed because of the coliform bacteria entering the spring water, presumably from the nearby cow pasture.

I share this experience with a rural Pennsylvania roadside spring because it is this kind of experience with the commons that have been largely absent or erased from the experiences of the generation of pre-service teachers I work with. As I try to build into a teacher preparation curriculum genuine conversations about the commons, it has become evident that for nearly everyone who has grown up in the United States since the turn of the millennium, there are scant opportunities to have any meaningful interaction with a commons (a real commons, not the shopping center-as-commons that has appropriated the term). I felt over the last two years of trying to prompt pre-service teachers to reclaim, or even just acknowledge, a commons for our teaching and learning of language, that this was a seemingly impossible task: none of them, even those who were predisposed to taking up issues of climate change and other environmental activist issues, had much first-hand familiarity living or working in a commons, given the depth and extent of the neo-liberalization of our schools, communities, and personal lives. It is this viscerally felt gap between the teacher knowledge that most of the pre-service teachers begin with and the kind of teacher knowledge that they will need to begin to achieve the kind of "good solutions" that Berry (1981) speaks about which shapes much of goals for this project. In particular, it is this gap that explains why I would adopt a narrative inquiry in the following chapter, rather than an *a priori* thematic analysis, in which one would code specifically for emerging themes in a language-as-commons orientation in Josie's

interview response (see Xu & Lui, 2011, for a distinction between narrative inquiry and thematic analysis). I am left at the conclusion of this project deeply skeptical that pre-service teachers, like Josie and others, not to mention all the other members of our community, and citizens of our country and planet, will be able to consider, let alone embrace, a turn back toward the commons, amid our immersion in a world in which people are programmed in service of institutions, unlimited growth remains unquestioned, and making money through increasing enclosure of the commons seems the natural and logical purpose for human activity.

## Chapter Five

### **Josie and Convivial ESL Teaching: A Narrative Inquiry**

In this chapter I share three broad narratives that emerged from Josie’s conversations with me over the year I worked with her. The first relates Josie experience tutoring, and the advocacy stance she brings to her teaching. The second relates Josie’s experience in Ecuador, in particular, her experience at Reserva Mazar, which was significant not for the encounter with the natural world there, nor the service-learning project, but with her observation of her peers and differing understandings of responsibility. The final narrative is Josie after the program, and where she sees herself going as she completes her degree and teaching certification. Throughout each of these narratives, my own observations and reflections are designated in italics, including at the end of each narrative, a more extended reflection on my own understanding what these narratives say about Josie’s emerging teacher knowledge and the relationship of that knowledge to convivial teaching practices; the final section in this chapter is an interpretation of how the teacher knowledge Josie shares throughout these narratives relate (or do not) to the prospects for bringing a language-as-commons orientation to the teaching and learning language.

#### **“So, I Emailed Her”**

Josie identifies as ethnically and culturally Korean, in a way that integrates the diverse experiences of her life. Her family moved to the US before she was born, because her father worked in a US-based tech company. Josie was born in California and is a US citizen. She moved around a lot in her early childhood: she started school in a

racially diverse school in Northern California, then later moved to Texas, then to China for several years, before returning to Korea for high school. Josie presented herself to me as someone who initially didn't really like school and certainly didn't envision herself as a future teacher. She said she observed a lot of bullying in school: intra-group bullying in what she saw as socially segregated schools where students from the same cultural or racial group were enforcing cultural expectations or norms on other members in these segregated school groups. Although Josie didn't ever engage in the bullying herself, she says she also didn't 'stick up' for the kids who were being bullied. Josie says of her time in middle school and high school, "I thought, well, education did hurt me in some ways, and so that's why I was like 'this is crap, this is dumb, I'm not going to do this anymore.'

*I have to admit that part of the reason I chose to work closely with Josie is that her story resonated with me. When she says that school hurt her in some ways, that it was 'crap', I empathize because I had similar experiences. This sense of what is wrong with school in part informs why I do this work, but it is also perplexing that people like Josie and I remain so intractably connected to an institution that has caused us some kind of harm.*

It was only later when she saw the experience of her cousin when her family (including her cousin) were living in Canada that her perspective on education began to shift. Her cousin is autistic and had struggled a lot both academically and socially when the family was living in Korea and in China. Once her cousin attended what Josie observed to be a more "accepting" school in Canada, he was able to begin to thrive. This,

according to Josie, is what impelled her to study education: it was the realization that making schools inclusive and welcoming places *matters* tremendously, particularly for students on the margins of what we might consider mainstream.

*When Josie explains what changed to motivate her to choose into education as a profession, despite the harm it has caused, I feel like I am left asking myself a similar kind of question. I don't think I can pinpoint an analogous experience like Josie has from her cousin.*

In elementary school, Josie moved with her family to China where she attended an international school with other ex-patriate families, where the school environment was translingual across English, Chinese, and Korean. She would describe the process of learning and using English in this setting as needing to “toughen up” and learning to take on English in a subtractive way, unconsciously accepting the (false) notion that only English was what was important to learn and any primary language support in Korean was a form of coddling that she shouldn't be accepting.

*This history of Josie's elementary school education came up during our first interview. I was impressed by how open Josie was to share her opinion, even if it went against some of the concepts on language that we had been talking about in the course. I had a glimpse of some of her philosophy on bilingualism through one of the first course blogs in the spring course. Josie and one other student (who happened to be one of the few other bilingual students) pushed back on the idea of translanguaging pedagogy on the basis of needing to “toughen up” bilingual learners. As I wrote Josie's story, it*

*seemed important, and rather incongruous, that Josie’s passion for making education inclusive for someone like her cousin (who had autism) did not include a sense that inclusion for language diversity in classrooms was equally vital. This would change over the process of her participation in the program.*

Josie returned to Korea for high school and then chose to attend Penn State University for college (for reasons that she never really explained). I first met Josie when she was a student in a required class for all students seeking teaching certification, CI280 “Intro to Teaching English Learners.” I had come to the class to give a brief talk to students about applying to participate in the Ecuador program. Josie quickly followed up with me to set up a time to talk at more depth about the program and at that time I was able to learn some more of her story. Josie shared then how the intro course was such a motivating class because the experiences of ELLs in US schools was immanently relatable to her, both in terms of her own experience as a language learner and her observations of her family members’ struggle to acculturate to US culture. It was her experience in CI280 and how it helped her make sense of her own language and cultural learning that inspired her to become a teacher of ELLs. When Josie had left our short meeting, I was deeply impressed with how *impassioned* about ELL education Josie was; she described her interest in ELL education as “200% in”. Josie seemed to embody Dewey’s notion of *wholeheartedness* in teaching.

The subsequent spring, Josie was accepted into and enrolled in the ESL Certificate Program with Ecuador Immersion. One of the first projects that Josie did in



the program was to begin a tutoring/conversation partner project with Sam, a student at the Penn State Intensive English Program (IECP), and a member of the Royal Saudi Navy studying on a special program to prepare technicians to read and use English-language operation manuals for the military helicopters that the US was selling to the Royal Saudi Navy. In the role of instructor, I met with Josie to provide feedback on her tutoring; Josie consistently exceeded the assignment requirements, as she researched and developed new materials for language practice: sharing poems, short stories, and English-language music with Sam. As engaged as she was in preparing meaningful opportunities for Sam to develop his English language proficiency, Josie remained sensitive not to offend Sam in any way. Yet Josie later reflected back in writing about this project, weighing her responsibility not to offend Sam but also acknowledging the question of the *purpose* in doing this project, as we see in the following excerpt from Josie’s tutoring journal:

Before meeting our ICEP (*sic*) partners I think someone mentioned how educators were the next ones to go into the field of colonizing after soldiers. I did love working with my ICEP partner, I enjoyed getting to know him and experiment different instructional methods. But somewhere deep inside of me was questioning, the purpose of my teaching English to my ICEP partner. To be honest, they are trained to use weapons. The purpose of their English exam was to have the skill to read the manual of the weapons in English. This made me think if I am unintentionally supporting people to use weapons.

*I consistently observed in Josie a “sensitivity” to what her students were feeling. She put a substantial amount of effort into developing multimodal and multigenre language learning lessons for Sam and she had later told me that she cried at their last meeting, when Sam had passed his exam and would move onto the next stage of training*

*in Texas. I ask myself, how do we push pre-service teachers to enter into hard conversations about purpose of teaching and learning when it is related to war-making, especially when the language learners they teach may not yet have the language needed to grapple with that kind of complicity in those kinds of conversations in English? Do we put such conversations off the table until a learner is ready? If so, what does that mean for our own (Josie's and my own) complicity in the waging of war in a place like Yemen, where these helicopters are almost certainly bound to be deployed?*

Around the same time as her work with Sam, Josie was contributing to a course blog in which student students had read a case study of an ELL to identify the conditions that are helping or hindering language acquisition. One of Josie's classmates wrote in a blog post:

A condition that might hinder second language learning is a lack of communication in the second language at home. When a child is home, there is a lot of communication that goes on within the family, but if they only communicate in their first language, a child cannot practice their second language outside of the classroom....

Josie responded:

This is an interesting point. Should we encourage ELL students to practice their second language at home as well? Personally, I don't know..because I do think that it may be helpful in some ways but maybe not..? I have no idea what I'm saying. Anyways, from personal experience, I know for sure that it is hard to speak a second language at home when the family only speaks one language. I was an ELL student, and my parents were trying to encourage me and my sister to speak English at home thinking that it will help us improve our English. But the funny thing was when we started our "English-only" time, we all just decided to not talk to each other

because we didn't know what to say. So I think it is an interesting point, and it is a great idea to question and research more on it.

*I can see how Josie's response online here was "pure Josie"—clearly based in an advocacy stance for ELLs, driven by her own sense of empathy for (and understanding of) ELLs, while hedging her assertions to avoid direct confrontation. This was characteristic of Josie at the time-- modest, and at times uncomfortable perhaps "owning" her own emerging expertise. "I think too much and I talk too much", Josie would explain to me.*

By March, the course blog moved into what might be considered by some a "controversial" issue in English language teaching--- the role of translanguaging and primary language support in the ELL classroom. Josie, along with other students, read a chapter by Ofelia Garcia (Garcia, 2011) that differentiated subtractive models of bilingualism from other models that are characterized as additive or dynamic. Subtractive bilingualism here means the kind of language acquisition in which a new language *replaces* one's prior language, in effect, subtracting from the learner's overall language repertoire, rather than expanding it. The Garcia (2011) chapter that Josie and her classmates read unequivocally critiques this modality of bilingualism, offering instead a pedagogy of "translanguaging" that values and makes use of all of the languages that a learner brings with them. In a blog post, Josie shares with her classmates the ways in which she has wrestled with this idea of translanguaging, both in her schooling and in her teacher preparation. Josie's blog post below reflected a certain ambivalence (perhaps reflective of the deferential attitude in earlier posts) as well as

what seems to be her sorting out her own relationship to multilingualism in the classroom as she writes this.

When I was in CI 280, a class about teaching bilingual students, I had to read this book and study about translanguaging. Personally, I did not want to agree with Garcia even though translanguaging was convincing. I was a bit salty because back when I was an ELL student, I was educated in a 'subtractive' way to learn English. I had to 'toughen up' to 'fit in' and learn English. It was terribly a painful process. I turned out to be a bilingual student even with the 'subtractive' strategy, maybe that was why I was stubborn to think that the subtractive way was effective.

Actually, now that I think back, somewhere deep inside of me think that people have to deserve to earn something rewarding. Back then, I was thinking that 'rewarding' was using English. Which is weird because it's just a language. I was unconsciously and consciously thinking that English is a language for 'good'... does this make sense? Is this supremacy of English? My mother tongue language and other languages are as good as English. Why was I thinking like that before? Hmm, I need to think more about it.

I did get convinced at the end of that class (I was convinced but it took me a while to accept it), because I noticed during my tutoring session with ESL students, everyone learns differently, and that I should be flexible as a person and an educator in the future. I think this strategy of translanguaging is great, but I do not want to think that it is the best strategy for my students in the future. Again this can limit myself of thinking that people learn differently. Whatever teaching and learning strategy, it should be focused on the student, and it is about whether it helps them or not.

*In my own role as one of the course instructors, I posted a synthesis of students'*

*blog posts that week. Among my notes on that week's blog postings, I wrote:*

I want to note some of the potential tensions that arise in adopting a translanguaging approach that a few students alluded to. Josie's post offers excellent insight into the ambivalence that she herself has felt around translanguaging in her own second language learning. It is

important to acknowledge the profound value of English that immigrant kids and families hold (what Josie, you call this perceived “supremacy” of English”). Different learners and families will come to different conclusions about the role of home languages in school settings, perhaps advocating for a “toughening up” stance that both Amy and Josie speak to. In such cases, families may come with the belief that school is for being immersed in English while home languages are to be used and learned at home.

There is, as always in the field of teaching, a space for critical self-reflection on how we promote translanguaging, especially those of us who are self-identified native and/or monolingual speakers of English, and the perception of hypocrisy in not prioritizing the acquisition of a valuable linguistic resource that we ourselves possess (English). This is where it becomes critical as teachers to listen carefully to our learners and their families, build close relationships with them, and be able to work collaboratively with learners and families to ensure all of our learners’ long-term academic success and personal well-being.

In a subsequent face-to-face conversation with Josie at a weekend class meeting and in interviews, she further unpacked her initial reaction to the idea of translanguaging in the CI280 class in that she had been even more resistant initially than she implies in her post. However, between the initial exposure to the idea of translanguaging in CI280 and the subsequent discussion in the spring Ecuador course, Josie had become able to name the “supremacy” of English for what it was, and could frame her future ESL teaching in a way that would broaden learners’ linguistic repertoire without buying into ideas of English superiority. In other words, when Josie says “I was unconsciously and consciously thinking that English is a language for ‘good’ ... Is this supremacy of English? My mother tongue language and other languages are as good as English,” we can see how Josie is reclaiming the value of her own vernacular vis-à-vis English, the “good” language that she had been taught to need.

*My heart leaps with joy every time I read this. This realization by Josie, “My mother tongue language [is]... as good as English” is at heart the kind of teacher knowledge that we need to reclaim a language as commons orientation for teaching English. I wonder what this looks like for pre-service teachers who are monolingual speakers of English? It is not enough that pre-service teachers simply acknowledge the equal value and validity of all home languages, but also to recognize how for students like Josie and many other ELLs, the overwhelming message they get from the dominant culture is that vernacular languages are not as good.*

Josie’s translingual turn became particularly clear in her tutoring work with Miley, which she started after Sam left State College. Miley was a first-year Penn State international student from Japan, who was enrolled in the course ESL 015, a first-year college composition course for non-native speakers of English. Josie was working with Miley on a final course paper, helping Miley to understand and interpret the prompt and the assignment requirements. Josie relates the following in her tutoring journal that week, in which she first describes some of the tutoring, then pastes the contents of an email conversation with Miley’s ESL015 professor, then relates her subsequent interaction with Miley’s professor:

...neither the instruction paper and the professor mentioned that students can use resources that are in their L1<sup>13</sup>.

So, I emailed her.

[the following email was pasted into Josie’s tutoring journal]

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<sup>13</sup> L1 here means “first language” or “home language”.

Dear Professor --,  
I hope you are doing well. I am an undergraduate student, in the process of gaining my TESL certificate.

I am currently helping out with one of your students on the research paper assignment. I have read your instructions and I was wondering if your student can use outside sources, as in some reliable sources in her own L1? I have read about translanguaging, and I thought it would be great for your student to experience it on searching the topic in her own language and enrich her essay with the information she find. So I did encourage her to search her sources in her L1. Since she is taking your class, I would like to hear about your opinion on this so that I am not guiding her in the wrong way. Again, I just want to help her as much as I can as you do, and I am hoping to hear about your opinion as a professor of applied linguistics.

Thank you so much,  
Josie [last name redacted]

Days passed. She did not reply me.  
So, I went to her class. ☺

I felt like a parent of my friend and go talk to the instructor. LOL.  
I was excited. I wore my best clothes so I don't look like a hobo. Had my resources as in the translanguaging guide textbook written by Garcia. I was ready to ask in a smart way, defend my position if it is not the case. I was ready to learn!!!

*I admit as I was reading this entry (after the event) I felt some trepidation for Josie entering a situation that I could imagine become confrontational. I had also wished I had known about her plan before the fact. Yet I also felt proud that Josie was a genuine advocate/activist who was unwilling to let the opportunity pass by because an instructor chose not to reply (or forgot to).*

Josie continues describing the interaction with Miley's teacher in her journal:

I met her professor.

Introduced myself as I did in the email, and asked if my friend can use outside L1 resources.

The answer was yes. Because for the sake that my friend asked her. But at least one resource that she researches has to be in English. This was because the purpose of this assignment was to see if students can research, synthesize the information and put it all together in a paper all in English.

I asked how or whether she takes translanguaging as an approach in her teaching. (This was just for my own learning). She said it is something to have in mind but it is hard to put it in action.

OK.

She was telling me how she is sometimes aware that her students will be translating her words into their words, and that she should slow down when she instructs. But it is hard for her to always put it into action.>> This was not an answer I expected.

Anyways, after talking to the instructor I learned that I need to know the purpose of the instruction and the assignment itself. This made more sense to me on how teachers might instruct students to research in English. However, I still think that she could've instructed students that they can research in their L1 and use at least one English resource. This is because will it not only help students' translanguaging skills, but also it is an act of respect on how research in other places in the world is valuable as well. Not letting students use other resources implies meaning. Is the professor saying that other resources are not important or not worth relying on?

*One part of my response to Josie's entry that week:*

**WOW! A few weeks ago you were a skeptic around translanguaging and now you are a powerful translanguaging advocate!**

It is important to note at this point, that Josie a few months later, as she assumed a teacher role in the ESL teaching practicum in Cuenca, Ecuador, embodied these translingual values that she had been advocating for on behalf of Miley. In the sheltered instruction unit on food that she and a co-teacher taught, the final project was a



bilingual cookbook of recipes that students gathered from their family. The recipes were written in English on the left and Spanish on the right; Josie explained to me that above all, she wanted this project to create opportunities for students and their families to use the book to learn together, so of course, it made perfect sense to be written as a bilingual text.

*Looking back over and reflecting on the entire previous section, I ask the question, like I feel I have often asked throughout this project— “What does this have to do with sustainability?” What, exactly, does Josie’s story here tell us about the prospects of bringing a language-as-commons approach into our teaching and learning of language? Every time I read this what stands out is that Josie has chosen to become a teacher because she cares: she sees what a teacher can do to make a difference in particular classrooms for particular students, and that becomes her teaching imperative. Other considerations that do not get translated into a logic of “student-centered” pedagogy become hard to even entertain for Josie. Even as Josie feels torn in how she should handle with Sam the difficult conversations around war (let alone climate change), the priorities of her emerging professional identity impel her to attend to more immediate and student-centered learning needs—those activities that might help Sam become integrated to the State College community or stay motivated to continue learning English. Such hard discussions about intractable problems (for Sam is no position himself to mitigate the conflict in Yemen) do not address individual learners’ needs, which are what remain paramount for an emerging teacher like Josie who has been inspired by the needs of her cousin and other family members in schools.*

*Understanding Josie's relationship to translanguaging is clearly important to understanding Josie's whole story and her teacher knowledge and how it shapes the decisions she makes as an emerging teacher. Josie, unlike many pre-service teachers I have worked with, is not reluctant to shake things up; she is willing and able to confront a university ESL teacher about the kind of scaffolding and translanguaging being offered. What is important here I suggest is that Josie's advocacy however emerged in the context of a particular learners' needs and challenges with whom she had a teacherly (or teacher-like) responsibility. This may be an aspect of the human condition: that we are unable to care about the whole world, we can only care about those in our immediate local orbit (which reflects an ethos that "thinking globally" is in fact an oxymoron and impossible, see Esteva & Prakash, 2010). Given that Josie had written earlier—"I think this strategy of translanguaging is great, but I do not want to think that it is the best strategy for my students in the future...., it should be focused on the student, and it is about whether it helps them or not"—I can only wonder how Josie might respond to learners who had little or no interest in translanguaging. When one's philosophy of student-centered teaching practice complements a language-as-commons orientation, as it does when Josie tutors Miley, there is no problem. But what about when learners have internalized the cultural stigma placed on their vernacular languages? How do teachers like Josie—like me—reconcile these competing demands when they conflict? I am fairly certain that Josie's teacher knowledge would maintain a focus on the student and the students' "needs" above all else.*

### **“People Don’t Like to Take Ownership of Their Mistakes”**

While Josie and I met for our first scheduled interview in the quiet, tranquil space of the Krauss Studio in the Chambers Building on Penn State campus to talk about her experiences in high school and in her classes at Penn State, Josie and I met for our second scheduled interview at a Korean restaurant in Cuenca, Ecuador that Josie had become fond of, in order to talk about the previous weeks of living, studying, and teaching in Ecuador. The owner of the restaurant was Korean, and spoke very little Spanish, which posed a bit of a challenge when I tried to order. Josie stepped in to coordinate our order, adding a few items off-menu that she thought I would like (which I did). It was the third week of the program (of five), and Josie and I had already gotten to know each other better than before.

In the first interview, Josie talked a lot about privilege, in particular how her understanding of privilege in teaching, learning, and living increasingly informed her own sense of herself and her teaching. She pointed to a set of classes (the “Literacy and Language Education” block, required for teacher certification) that she was taking that spring that prompted her to reflect on “privileges... and how that drives the society, how that drives our education.” Josie struggled with the idea of privilege and what it means. She suggested that a person should be pleased to have privileges in one’s life—it is a benefit, a kind of social status, yet she observes how white, privileged students get offended or indignant when their privileges are pointed out to them. For Josie, privilege could not be separated from money, financial resources, and material comfort. In some ways for Josie, to be privileged is to be successful. In a word map from the course that she had shared with me at our first interview, Josie links the concept of

privilege to “consumerism”, “materialism”, and “social media”. Yet Josie, as a binational Asian-American woman, identifies herself as having privilege, even as she asks why it is hard for white Americans to self-identify in that way. In the interview, she asks me whether privilege can actually mean something like growing up in a loving stable family. “Why are we only defining privilege to materialism?” Josie challenged me during the first interview.

*Both during the interviews with Josie and throughout the work of reflecting on what Josie said and writing this narrative, I ask myself how issues of privilege, especially racial privilege, are made sense of within a “language-as-commons” orientation. In some ways, one of the most significant roadblocks to getting teachers and families to embrace a translingual commons, particularly among racial and ethnic minorities, has long been the understanding that it is the acquisition of English, and specifically, the standard variety of English that is the means to material success and social power in our society (as argued, for example, by Delpit, 1995). How do I/we respond to teachers and families who earnestly believe that the best path to success (and success defined as a middle-class or upper-middle class “American” lifestyle) is to acquire the privileges that are conveyed by standard English?*

*I also want to ask how, if at all, is this kind of conversation about the enclosure of language posed by standard English relates to the pressure on farmers, like Earl Spencer, to make decisions to maximize yield, without considering the impact of those decisions on the social and ecological network in which they live.*

When Josie arrived in Ecuador, it was clear to faculty and other participants alike, that Josie had come with an abundance of enthusiasm: she connected quickly and closely with her homestay family and was always eager to try out the beginner Spanish she was learning, drawing on the linguistic repertoire she had, including the creative use of the vocabulary she knew and a robust use of gesture. In the classroom as either student (in the “teaching methods” classes) or as a teacher (in the teaching practicum), Josie was highly engaged and exuded a positive attitude.

It was only after three weeks that Josie ever shared or showed the first real signs of frustration with me, at our interview at the Korean restaurant after the weekend excursion to Reserva Mazar<sup>14</sup>. Josie’s frustration was not related to the work or the setting of the weekend, but rather about group dynamics during that weekend. “It was more of like a challenging team building,” Josie would explain a few days later in our interview in the Korean restaurant, “because it’s like we’re just thrown into this one house, like two cabins, and it’s not like we’ve known each other forever and it’s just like we were just thrown in after we’ve been together with our host families.” For Josie, part of the frustration was in part about losing time with her homestay family (a frustration that, in the subsequent weekend excursion boiled over to visible anger and sadness). Josie also described how the frustration also came from a clear difference in cultural assumptions and maturity level between Josie and many of the other participants (the majority of whom were white, US-born, young women).

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<sup>14</sup> Reserva Mazar is located in a remote part of the eastern slope of the Andes, and was the site for service-learning work one weekend, planting trees for a reforestation project and learning about the local culture, history, and ecology of this region of Ecuador. See previous chapter for a longer description of the Mazar excursion.

I started the interview with the question of what was particularly impactful about the weekend, Josie shared: “I noticed that people really don’t like to take ownership of their mistakes”.

*This was surprising to me. Although there had been some noticeable intra-group conflict over the weekend, my expectation of what Josie might have gotten from the weekend excursion was much more about the kind of encounter with nature that the weekend had meant to provide. The setting for the excursion is rather remarkable, and having myself done a number of focus groups and interviews with students about the kind of experience and learning they had at Mazar, responses are almost universally focused on the natural beauty and the awe felt in that setting. (Of course, I look back now and I realize that every one of those previous interviewees had been white, US domestic students, which may explain the skewed responses). Josie’s experience was framed through the human interactions she had had in that place, and less so by the beauty and awe that other participants tended to focus on.*

Josie here is referring, indirectly, to a conflict that weekend between two groups of students, sparked by the noise level of one group (which was a mixed group of US and Ecuadorians) one evening in the common area that was the floor below other students’ sleeping area. For Josie, the conflict was really about what she calls “not respecting” each other, and demonstrating what Josie sees as “basic manners” when asked to be quiet. Josie had been in the common room, but she explained “I apologized right away.... I didn’t know my voice level was really loud”. As she considered the others in the room, Josie seemed perplexed and frustrated that some of the other white students

in the common room were escalating the conflict and essentially refused to accept responsibility for disturbing others.

*Because the common room conflict continued to affect group interactions the next day (and even over the final two weeks of the program), not only Josie but many of the students were prompted by myself and other faculty to reflect critically on what had happened. As I listened to different people describe what had happened, it seemed to me like the conflict could be viewed through the lens of cultural difference (what counts as inappropriately loud or inappropriately late may be culturally specific) or through the lens of group dynamics (the conflict represented a play for power between two competing cliques in the group). I did not however, think about this conflict in term of white privilege until Josie and I talked in our interview. In retrospect, it is clearer to me the that this was a conflict over a “common” space, which reflects the fundamental challenges in regulating commons more generally. This conflict could have been a powerful teaching moment to discuss and understand the idea of responsibility as one of the central, guiding principles in maintaining and recovering the commons (Shiva, 2010).*

Josie would tell me how she made sense of the conflict by evoking a surprising analogy to indigenous history in the Americas. Josie explains in the interview what she meant by her initial observation that “people don’t like to take ownership of their mistakes”:

We had a talk [in one of the classes] how Native Americans in the US are not treated as they should be... like it’s a colonized country... it had an impact, a negative impact on people... it’s not about pointing fingers at someone but at least reflect. Think that ‘oh this was not a good idea’. Next time if this happens

maybe I'll think again because I know the result will make a difference... We have to learn from history."

For Josie, there was a connection between the *white* peers who she observed refusing to accept responsibility for their part in a conflict, and being unable to be conciliatory during that conflict, and the broader *white* inability to take responsibility historically for the colonization (and indeed genocide) of the indigenous peoples of the Americas. Josie sees this incident (along with the broader historical context of responsibility) as a core part of her teacher identity. "The teacher is a role model" she tells me in a later interview. "So at first if I make a mistake I'm gonna apologize and I'm gonna mean it... because everyone makes mistakes." But for Josie, apologies do not mean that one disregards consequences, as she explains:

Showing that actions have consequences, I will try to be a good role model. There is no directive. I'm not going to force people to like each other. I will respect their opinions... It's not like you have to accept everything but I'm gonna make them think. I don't wanna be a person and be like "Think this way, think that way." ... I wanna let them have a choice."

This idea of her future teaching practice in which she models (and expects) responsibility—the 'honest bookkeeping' that Orr (1992) calls for-- is what allows Josie to subsequently make the connection between the kind of teacher she wants to be and the crises of sustainability and climate change that the world is currently grappling with. Josie continues observing "it's funny when people say 'it's not my problem'... people throw away stuff without thinking. That impacts other people.... There is a connection."

When she talks at the Korean restaurant about people's irresponsibility with trash, it recalls our earlier interview in which she shared one small but critical



observation between the US and Korea: “It’s really shocking, I was actually shocked when I was here. The plastic bags you don’t pay for them. I was so shocked.” It was the shock of being in Wal-mart in State College, and having brought her own bags (because in Korea she would have to pay for each bag used), but the cashier just put the stuff in the rotating plastic bag equipment. She relates this to government decisions, as has been done in Korea to limit the availability of plastic bags “so that people start using the things they have”.

*What does Josie’s story tell us here about the relationship between privilege, in this case racial privilege and re-orienting language teaching and learning toward the commons? On one hand, Josie recognizes privilege carries real material benefits: such benefits include a wealth and income gap between white and African-American families. Accounting for these inequalities in income and wealth appears to be a fundamental issue in educational equity, not to mention an issue of long-term sustainability, as these gaps widen. And yet... Josie notes that when we name privilege as solely or even primarily an issue of material well-being, we are playing to a materialist and consumerist bias. Josie’s straightforward question “Why are we only defining privilege to materialism?” evokes the reasoning of Illich and others in the post-development school who suggest that “poverty” as a form of deprivation should be understood as a construct of late industrial capitalism interested in creating “needs” (Illich, 2010; Sachs, 2010). I don’t want to give any impression that this is a “poverty is a state of mind” argument; when people have been cut off from accessing convivial work and tools to sustain themselves and are burdened with heavy loads of shadow work, such “deprivation” is harmful and perpetuates over generations. Any sustainable solution for income inequality however, cannot simply mean*

*that a base level of consumption (the level that is constituted as the basic human “need”, see Illich, 2010) is elevated. Rather it is incumbent to re-vitalize a conviviality in our work and tools as what Josie calls the privilege of growing up in a stable family (and I would add a convivial, equitable, and sustainable community).*

*The theme I notice across this conversation with Josie in Korean restaurant, reflecting on the experience in Mazar as well as her experience in the program as a whole, has everything to do with responsibility, and the role that responsibility plays in Josie’s teacher knowledge. She expects it from others, but even more so from herself, as a core tenet for shared community life, even convivial life. Responsibility is, after all, one of the core guiding principles of the commons that Shiva (2010) notes, and fundamental to the kind of “honest bookkeeping” that I would seek to instill among the pre-service teachers I work with.*

### **“That Language is Gonna Get You Everywhere”**

Josie’s political beliefs are clearly not aligned with the dominant neo-liberal assumptions that most Americans (and as Josie implies as well, most Koreans) have grown up with. Josie shares with me at the restaurant one of the most important pieces of advice that she said her father had shared with her: “Don’t fetch money”. It came up in our conversation over Korean food when Josie was talking about a conversation in class the previous day that has examined issues of language commodification in the teaching and learning English.

Josie: I was very offended. Not [at] you, but like the overall class. They were talking as if as if teaching as an economic value.

John: Yeah? How do you feel about that?

Josie: I was hurt.

John: And why were you hurt?

Josie: Because it seems like their focus is on money. Not about learning and teaching and people.”

Josie continues with a story:

I get it. Money is important. It is a bit necessary in our life but doesn't mean that it has to be a goal. There are so many other things that can be a goal. And one thing my dad...ha, ha. My dad's amazing. So it was so funny. So like he was in the car and he dropped me off in school because he came with me to school right before he went to Korea. He's like, "Josie, don't fetch money. You're never gonna fetch. Don't fetch money," and he left. It was hilarious because I...freshmen year I was like, "What about this, what about bills, what about money, what about this? How am I gonna afford all this? What about..." But then right before he left, in his car, he's like, "Don't fetch money," and he left. And I was like, "What does that mean?" He didn't give me any answer but he doesn't...he never gives me answers but like it was interesting to think about it on like don't fetch money.

Part of Josie's frustration with her perception of her classmates for seeing English language teaching as economically valuable (in a personal sense: international job prospects, higher salary in some job markets than other teachers) was connected by Josie to her own experience in Korea of having unqualified, native-speaker teachers who obtained their jobs solely on the basis of ostensibly their first language, but practically speaking because of their nationality and race and were there simply to make money. "That's why unqualified native English speakers go [to Korea] and like freaking teach," Josie says, as she starts to make punching gestures. "I wanna punch something real bad. I'm just so frustrated with that... Anyway, I'm just so frustrated."

*Josie's story of unqualified native English speakers as teachers has prompted me to address this issue with future students, explicitly talking about non-native speaker bias in hiring in the field of English language teaching. Even as the field in general recognizes the inherent racism of hiring teachers on the basis of native-speaker status (see Kubota & Lin, 2006), I have to ask why then does this practice continue to be so pervasive (Mahboob & Golden, 2013). It is worth considering that this non-native speaker bias in TESOL arises from the very root metaphors of the field that treat language as commodified. Preserving the value of a language variety requires the creation of scarcity, which is achieved in this case, through the position of the native speaker as the true guarantor of the language; importantly for ensuring scarcity, no one not born a native speaker can ever become one.*

And yet, it is hardly that simple. English, at least in for Josie and her family, remains an indisputable means to social mobility: "Do you know what my mom said when I was studying English and whenever I'd get like frustrated about English?" Josie asked, "She'll be like, "That language is gonna get you everywhere."

I set up one last time to talk with Josie, to share with her sections of the narrative I was writing to ask for her input as a form of member checking. At this time, Josie was finishing up her student teaching: she was teaching in an urban, public elementary school in Philadelphia, in a neighborhood that was not economically well-resourced and grappling with a drug epidemic. When I asked how her student teaching was going, she said she loved working with her kids but "that freaking public school, oh my God, they eat you alive. They do. It's not the kids. It's like 90% of the problems are the adults not

the kids.” Josie relates the difficulties that she sees her mentor teacher going through, including low pay and poor treatment from administration.

She asks me for a favor during the interview, which I was happy to oblige: to look over her resume for the jobs that she is applying for when she graduates. I asked her what kind of jobs she is looking for and she stated unambiguously that she would be applying to teach in international schools back in South Korea. Keenly aware of the extent of Josie’s experience working with ELLs and immigrant youth in the US, including virtual tutoring with Hispanic students in Hazleton, Pennsylvania, and student teaching in a high-poverty area in urban Philadelphia, I was curious what had drawn her to apply to work instead in private, international schools in Korea. She first told me that her parents were back in Korea and she wanted to spend time with them before she returned to graduate school in the US, but as she continued she shared a reason that she seemed to suggest was equally compelling—the desire to have a well-paying job in an era in which economic insecurity is widely felt:

Because I’m a senior now, I’m just like a little bit desperate to get a job... I’m not in a hurry but it’s just like, I don’t know, a lot of other people are just so worried about getting jobs and I’m thinking that’s why we have pressure and everything... So Korea was just one of my options, that’s why I’m applying. But now that I research a lot about it, it is a bit appealing because the money, especially because they’re all private schools.

*My heart sank a bit when Josie shares this. I had already written up the earlier in the section about “don’t fetch money” and I knew in this last interview I had wanted to follow up with Josie on it, but I was surprised, given the conversations we had had in the*

*summer, that she was framing her decisions primarily in terms of money. And yet, it was completely understandable.*

In the interview I asked her directly about how she made sense of her dad's advice now, after teaching in a low SES, Title I school.

John: Now I wanna ask you...because this is one of the things I wanted to ask you about, I remember very vividly you telling me about your dad's advice to you is don't fetch money.

Josie: Did I say something about that?

John: Yeah, so how do you...in your mind, how do you balance, we need money to live but we don't fetch money. I'm just curious.

Josie: Oh, that's like need and want, like what I teach my fourth graders, "What do you really need to survive, and what do you want?" Like is it necessary or can you get another alternative that is more helpful for the environment or like whatever, you know, besides the cost and everything. So I think like private schools is definitely a want. Oh, my God. I saw the benefits the teachers are getting and oh God, I thought they were like, I don't know, electrical engineers or something. I can never imagine that much money in here, like in the U.S., even in a private school. There are so many benefits, health insurance behind it, housing provided, and they give you a monthly salary, you know, like they give you salaries. And then they're free to lunch in the school because they have a really big cafeteria, whatever, fancy stuff. All the facilities are so expensive. They're all like so big and shiny and the videos are like, "Gee, this is 21st century, like this century." They have like a VR thing.

*As I wrote this part of the narrative, I felt pulled between two different quotes to use as the title for this section, both of which I felt characterized different aspects of the tension that not only Josie but probably nearly every teacher of ESL might feel. The quote I chose: "That language is gonna get you everywhere" is Josie quoting her mom and the value that parents, likely everywhere in the world put on equipped their children with the tools they need to be successful in the lives they are going to live. English is*

*commodified and capitalized, and precisely because of that commodification, English becomes a tool—a non-convivial tool likely—to ensure one’s children’s material wellbeing into the future, especially in an era of economic anxiety and uncertainty. I have to admit that I too have seen English—or rather the teaching of English—as a professional asset; amid conditions of economic uncertainty and anxiety there is something comforting about knowing that there will also be someone, somewhere who “needs” to learn English. I too acknowledge the validity of Josie’s mom’s advice that “that language [English] is gonna get you anywhere.” That that comfort is a perverse comfort is clear in Josie’s desire to punch the unqualified, overpaid, native-speaker English language teachers who capitalize on the economic value of a linguistic repertoire that they (nor I for that matter) have had to work to acquire.*

*The other quote—one that I ended up not choosing for the title of this section—was Josie’s observation that “They have like a VR thing” at the Korean international school she is interviewing at. Even as Josie reflects critically on privilege and responsibility, rejects the idea of “fetching money”, and finds it meaningful to work with learners in a low-SES urban school, it is precisely that experience of working in an urban school that makes ‘a VR thing’ even more appealing. I suggest that the “VR” stands in here for a whole constellation of factors—higher pay, well-resourced classrooms, higher respect—that are natural for any teacher, especially a new teacher, to seek out. As Motha and Lin (2014) describe, language learning (and thus language teaching) is at heart, a project (and product) of desire, and the constellation of factors that “VR” represents, is desirable.*

*Illich (1973) here provides a critical reminder of the grip of desire, comfort, and consumption on the teachers we prepare and the students they work with when he points out that “it is impossible to teach joyful renunciation in a world totally structured for higher output and the illusion of declining costs” (p 66). To Josie, like many or all of us, the seductiveness of “VR” and what it represents, can be especially difficult to renounce, and hardly joyfully so.*

### **Language-as-Commons Orientation in Practice**

The final part of the narrative inquiry is an extended “commentary” in which I reflect on Josie’s experience as a pre-service teacher and her emerging teacher knowledge in conversation with the principles of a “language-as-commons” orientation described in Chapter 3.

Of course, we can see how translanguaging and translingual practice, which I propose as an indispensable part of a language-as-commons orientation, also play an indelible role in Josie’s teacher knowledge and practice. At the earliest part of her ESL teacher preparation she moved from doubting to advocating for translanguaging on the behalf of her tutee. In this sense, Josie is advocating for new practices that undermine or question the radical monopoly of English in favor of meaningful vernacular practices that she knows that students bring into their language classroom, whether this was her tutee Miley seeking to do research in her first language, the bilingual cookbook that included both vernacular language (the informal Spanish of families and their cooking) and



vernacular food practices themselves, or Josie herself learning to name the supremacy of English as such.

The enclosure of language that a “language-as-commons” orientation resists takes the form of not only of a kind of monolingualism in the classroom, but also as the privileging of standard varieties, and along with that, in many cases, a native-speakerism that enshrines the enclosure of a language standard and ensures that it remains the property of those who can lay claim to the status of native speaker of English as birthright. Josie, like many other so-called “non-native” speaking (NNS) teachers of English are rightfully offended by the bias and racism inherent in native-speakerism, and hence her “punching” the imaginary, unqualified native English-speaking teachers in Korea. In this way, we can see how so-called non-native speaking teachers of English, like Josie, can be some of the most important and vocal advocates for re-orientation toward “language as commons” in our field.

It is unclear the degree to which Josie, like many of her peers, has grappled with the ways in which English works in service to state, institutional, and industrial actors, rather than in the interests of learners themselves. In a neoliberal world in which desires, including desires of language learning (Motha & Lin, 2014) have been almost entirely commodified and monetized, it may be difficult to distinguish in any meaningful way the interests of individual learners from the interests of the industrial, late capitalist system in which they are embedded. When these interests converge, as they do for many learners, whether they are the 4<sup>th</sup> grade ELLs in Philadelphia or the Ecuadorian language learners in Cuenca, it can be particularly challenging for an emerging teacher like Josie, who as a central part of her professional teacher identity put the “needs” of her learners first, to be

able to disentangle “need” from necessity, in the sense that Illich talks about (Illich, 2010). Teaching of English learners has become so connected with meeting English learners’ “needs”, as we can see from the conversations I had with Josie about her ELL’s “needs” that I related in one of the three “moments” that started Chapter 3. It may highly unlikely, in lieu of a sustained critique of how “needy man” (sic, Illich, 2010) is constructed through late modern discourses of development and neoliberalization, that pre-service teachers like Josie may be able to robustly challenge a needs-based discourse that has come to construct English learners in terms of their needs. What is pernicious about thinking about learners’ needs is not only that such needs are hard to question (i.e. who wants to argue against “meeting needs”), but that needs, as exogenically defined in terms of an open-ended process of development, are never satisfied; there are always new needs. How then do we get pre-service teachers like Josie to move beyond language learning as a “need”, when social, economic, and institutional pressures give them no reason to do so?

In this picture of Josie that I have drawn and shared here, I don’t suggest that this is comprehensive, objective, nor widely generalizable to any other pre-service teacher. What I do hope I have provided is picture of one person’s complex relationship to a language commons that gives us some sense of Berry’s (1981) idea of a good solution that “existed in proof and practice”, even as, at the end, we see Josie being attracted by the neoliberal lure. By no means is it clear to me that Josie’s case provides us with any final evidence for how we might enact a more convivial English language teaching;

rather Josie's story raises fundamental questions about how it might look and whether such work is even possible, questions that I look at closely in the next and final chapter.

## Chapter Six

### Implications:

#### **Persisting Questions for Reclaiming Language as Commons in Convivial English Language Teaching**

As I reflect here at the end of a process of reading Illich, talking with Josie, and considering the prospects for reclaiming language as commons in our ESL language teaching, I see that I am left with two fundamental questions that may be unanswered (and may ultimately be unanswerable). The implications of this research—research “with” Illich and “with” Josie—are not conclusions, but questions that will impel continuing investigation and scholarship, which I think is appropriate given the nature and scope of this project. In this final chapter then, I want to look at each implicated question that we (my readers and I) are left with:

#### **Persisting Question: What Does Sustainability Have To Do With Teaching ESL?**

This had been the fundamental driving question that got me started on this project. It is a question that I had asked initially in a serious way when I began reading Illich with Madhu in her class, and it is not entirely clear to me whether through this process I have yet been able to answer, in a meaningful and substantial way, this question.

This is not to say that I have not come to be able to respond to the “teaching ESL to polar bears” kind of skepticism that may be presented. At a recent weekend class session for teachers preparing to do the 2019 ESL Certificate Program with Ecuador Immersion, for example, I facilitated a conversation about this, prompting students to

reflect on how the profession of teaching ESL will be profoundly impacted by climate change refugees, how the spread of English has driven the extinction of indigenous languages, and how the issue of sustainability in teaching ESL is in fact tremendously broad, encompassing issues of income inequality, institutional racism, and equity in schooling, along with commodification of language in the English language teaching industry (all of which, I assured them, we will not have time to fully engage with in the context of five courses).

However, the question remains whether *this* research speaks in any direct and substantive way to sustainability. A fundamental concern that I leave this project with is whether efforts to reclaim conviviality and the commons in English language teaching speaks to many of the more immediate (and frightening) impacts of our decidedly unsustainable practices in English language teaching, not to mention our society as a whole. As Illich (1973) points out, restoring conviviality in our relationships with our technologies is not merely an individual task, but demands structural changes in the arrangements of society, such as disestablishing compulsory schooling and removing the infrastructure that services non-convivial tools like automobiles. The fundamental question then, is whether there is any political will at all in this present moment to undertake such radical structural change.

It is also unclear to me whether a call to conviviality in English language teaching, even if feasible, would directly (or even indirectly) address any number of the crises of sustainability that I outlined in the first chapter of this dissertation: the rise of climate refugees, mounting language extinction, and the seemingly insuperable spread of the neoliberal economic and political paradigm. In the spirit of “honest bookkeeping”

(Orr, 1992), I believe that it is important to ask whether attending to the issue of conviviality in English language teaching distracts from the more pressing work of building our field's capacity to work with climate refugees or to teach English in indigenous communities in ways that are more responsive to the risks of language loss. I am left asking whether the choices I made have been the best choices in the face of the crises of sustainability that we face.

I do want to suggest, however, that there is at least one benefit for this choice of looking specifically at conviviality and a reclaimed commons in language teaching as my way into making sense of how we may respond to the present crises of sustainability. Given that this idea of "sustainability" remains a contested concept (Leal Filho, 2000), I suggest, is that by inserting Illich's radical critique into the emerging discourse on sustainability in English language teaching, there is a promise of shifting the discourse around the stakes of the debate around sustainability. If the field of TESOL is to take up issues of sustainability in a meaningful way, it has to go beyond partial measures that deal with these issues on an ad hoc basis, but rather question what it is in our disciplinary history and identity that has made it so difficult to ask these questions about sustainability in our work. The idea of conviviality in English language teaching, if taken seriously, demands rethinking many core assumptions and practices in TESOL, from the notion of tacitly embracing the global spread of English, to the centering our work on the standardized norms of the native speaker, and ultimately to the idea that learning and teaching English remains a net social good in the era of the second watershed. I think an apt metaphor for how Illich's critique demands a rethinking of the professional TESOL identity is that of Exxon-Mobil or any other global, extractive industry. To work as a

professional ESL teacher amid Illich's second watershed is not intrinsically "evil", any more than working for a corporation such as Exxon Mobil is intrinsically and necessarily "evil". Employees in either domain can and should contribute in positive, even convivial ways, that mitigate the harm imposed by the industry as a whole. Such grassroots work is important and valuable, but we should not mistake the convivial efforts of individuals working amid an industrial, commodified, and unsustainable paradigm, for a net benefit that the industry (either English or petroleum extraction) provides the planet.

**Persisting Question: Is it Possible to Re-imagine a Convivial English Language Teaching?**

At the same weekend class session that I had mentioned above, there was a panel of experienced ESL teachers, all of whom were conscientious, dedicated, and well-intentioned teachers of and advocates for English learners and immigrants. However, when one pre-service teacher asked the panel about strategies for translanguaging in linguistically heterogeneous classrooms, a clear pattern of responses emerged: don't let them use their first language as a crutch, make them use English during designated ESL class time. Of course, these teachers see the need for English and for them, making English obligatory in the classroom is a service and a benefit to the English learners they teach. Doubtless, many of the learners, as well likely many of the adult English learners they were also talking about, share these assumptions around the need of English, and the perceived benevolence in alienating a person from the vernacular languages of their heritage and identities when they enter an ESL classroom. Like many well-meaning

teachers of English, they believe in a benevolent imposition of monolingual English classrooms and standardized language varieties.

Given how deeply-held these beliefs about the benefits of a monolingual English ESL class remain, it may be worth suggesting for any curriculum that aims to address conviviality and sustainability as integral parts of ESL teacher preparation, a kind of “stealth curriculum” may be called for, in which principles of conviviality and the language commons are not presented as such, but rather as general good practice, with evidence justifying their use on the basis of outcomes and outputs for their learners, rather than on the basis of a more convivial ethic. This may be especially the case for pre-service ESL teachers for whom such considerations may not on the surface be directly relevant to the work of teaching ESL. It may be that any resistance among pre-service teachers (not to mention other teacher educators or educational leaders) to “deep ecology” or “eco-justice pedagogy” that obliges a teacher to radically rethink how and what she is doing may require teacher educators to embed this kind of curriculum in implicit ways but of course, that risks the possibility of pre-service teachers failing to develop the kind of teacher knowledge around these issues that Josie (and other pre-service teacher who were part of the project) were able to develop through sustained exposure to concepts like the commons, native speakerism, and translanguaging pedagogy.

The teachers in the panel that I describe above appear to genuinely believe that obligatory English is in service of their students in ways that I would be hard pressed to disabuse them of; these beliefs are almost certainly reinforced by an assessment regime that prioritizes English and erases vernacular. To the administrators who supervise ESL



teachers, embracing a convivial English language teaching may appear dangerous or even irresponsible, and sadly, in a post-truth era, it may be seem political and ideological for a teacher to frame his or her teaching in terms of an ethical response (that is to say “honest bookkeeping”) in the face of the crises of sustainability. Instead, it may be necessary in order to reclaim language as commons that we revise from the ground up how we think and talk about our language teaching and learning. It must be acknowledged that the incentive for this kind of revision may be quite limited, especially in the face of resistance at multiple levels from colleagues, administrators, and parents. For a teacher to make the choice to put a language commons at the heart of her or his teaching practice is and will remain risky.

When thinking about how this grassroots activism of the commons works, it is critical that the scale of the commons is best (or perhaps only) understood in terms of local economies and local cultures that govern those commons. As Esteva and Prakash (2010) argue there is no “think globally, act locally”—there is only “think locally, act locally”. There is a persistent contradiction between the scale of the issue—local action is fundamentally constrained by system-level, global forces that prioritize enclosure. Even as individual actors can be hard-pressed to make choices that do not contribute to climate change and environmental degradation in the face of radical monopolies that restrict access to more commons-based alternatives, it will be the local actions to build and sustain commons in our own classrooms, schools, universities and communities that take place at the only scale that matters. The fundamental dilemma of reclaiming a language commons in light of Esteva & Prakash’s (2010) critique of “global thinking” is that the scope of global problems seems too daunting to be faced only by local actions.

Nevertheless, following Esteva & Prakash (2010), it is global thinking that has eroded a conviviality that is grounded in local and vernacular practices and communities; it is only “the work of local culture,” to borrow the language of Berry (1990), that revitalizes a language commons.

Another way to ask this persistent question about the prospects of a convivial English language teaching: can we trust our learners to the language they have for the purposes they themselves wish, without obligating that communication happen in a policed and standardized English? To answer this question in the affirmative opens the door to putting translingual practices (Canagarajah, 2013b), code-meshing (Canagarajah, 2006), translingual composition (Horner, Lu, Royster, & Trimbur, 2011) and translanguaging pedagogies (Garcia & Wei, 2014) as central practices in the professional preparation of ESL teachers, which remain to various degrees contested or controversial. I propose that to advocate for a language-as-commons orientation to language learning can be a form of translingual activism, and vice versa.

One hope that I have for this work is that it contributes to the ongoing complication in the field of TESOL that Canagarajah (2016) has described happening over the last two decades as the disciplinary shift which has made issues of identity, race, and positionality salient to the work of teaching ESL; it has now been largely accepted in the field that to teach ESL is to deal with issues of race, ethnicity, power and politics, even as only a few decades earlier the centrality of these issues to the work of English language teaching and teacher preparation remained contested. Similarly, this present project aims to help illustrate how positionality as human beings invested in the survival of self and planet (see for example, TESOL, 1984) likewise can be taken up as a core and

critical identity in the work of teaching ESL over the coming years. To address these questions and concerns—to make sustainability, conviviality, and a language commons central considerations in the field-- will require, however, ongoing, lasting, fundamental ideological shifts in how we see our work and our place in the world doing it.

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## VITA

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