Investment in English Language Education: Perspectives from a Peruvian NGO

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Introduction

This qualitative research project:

- Examines how **Peruvian university students, who study English** as an additional language, subsequently **pursue careers in English teaching to give back to their communities** using **Darvin and Norton's (2015) framework of investment**
- Explores how students in Huaraz understand the **importance and benefits of teaching English and its experiences and challenges**
- Investigates the **impact of local NGOs** in students' professional trajectories



Map locating Huaraz, Peru

Seeds of Hope Perú is a nongovernmental organization located in Huaraz that provides educational support and resources to economically disadvantaged youth. Volunteers are able to tutor children and/or assist in teaching English at a local public school.

English Education in Peru

- **Inglés, Puertas al Mundo (English, Doors to the World)**, established in 2015, is Peru's government initiative intended to **promote English proficiency** across the nation
- Aims for high school students to **reach CEFR B1 proficiency** by the time of their graduation
- English is a **mandatory subject in secondary schools and higher education** institutions
- Reforms include **increased English lesson time** and **teacher training** in Peru and in English-speaking countries

Current Literature

- Second language acquisition (SLA) **research is primarily concentrated and conducted in WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, Democratic) countries**
- Language education **experiences in the Global South are underrepresented**
- TESOL International (2024) reports **research priorities in teaching methods and professional learning**

Purpose

- Investigate how individuals understand the **value and importance of language education** for their future
- Use findings for educators and policymakers in how to **provide accessible and equitable education** to students of all backgrounds
- Consider the **value of multilingualism and language education** for underresourced communities

How does participation in NGO-based English programs shape students' investment in learning and teaching English as a form of social, cultural, and economic capital?

Data Collection

- **Semi-structured interviews** (n=6) conducted in Spanish with questions regarding experiences learning and teaching English
- Participants consisted of **Peruvian university students enrolled in an English teacher training program and Seeds of Hope**
- Interviews were **transcribed** and **translated** into English
- Data was analyzed through **inductive and deductive coding methods**

Findings

Socioeconomic Mobility

- Learning English is a resource that can **expand educational and professional opportunities**
- **Applied in professional careers** outside of teaching (healthcare, business, tourism, etc)
- Learning English increases **self-efficacy**, boosting confidence in student capabilities

Classroom Subject to Social Practice

- **Motivation** emerges from **relationships and experiences with English speakers**, making English meaningful in their lives
- **Social media and Internet is a learning resource** and increases students' interests in English
- Learning English is **more than an academic subject**, but a way to **gain a deeper understanding of global contexts**
- Interacting with English speakers increases **interest to travel and pursue opportunities abroad**



International volunteers from Seeds of Hope presenting about their home country at an English class at a local public school.

NGOs and Community Building

- **Positive experiences with teachers** influenced students' **teaching approaches**
- Students who participated in Seeds of Hope call it a "**second family**"; organization provides **financial, academic, and emotional support**
- English teaching is a way to **pass down knowledge** and **make an impact on the next generation**
- **Cultural and language exchange** benefits international volunteers and locals

Challenges

Public vs. Private Education

- Private school students have **more English instruction time** and **accessibility** to resources, support, and educational opportunities
- Public school students have **English class once a week, larger class sizes, and less flexibility**

Rural vs. City Divide

- Students in cities find **more opportunities in using English in daily life**
- Students in rural areas like Huaraz only relate English to tourism, leading to **lack of application in their daily life**
- **Social relationship between teachers and students** changes depending on the **educational context**

Financial Constraints

- Top students often attend extra English classes, creating a **gap in performance between high-income and low-income students**
- Many families **lack access to the Internet**
- Students **work instead of pursuing higher education** to support their families

Cultural and Linguistic Identity Preservation

- **Quechua**, an Indigenous language of Peru, is endangered and **efforts to preserve it are being developed**
- Learning globally dominant languages **shouldn't require abandoning indigenous languages**
- Language learning is a way to **understand history and culture**

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