

## **Paradise in Progress? Narratives of Place in Monteverde, Costa Rica**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Ecolinguistics is a growing field that combines the disciplines of ecology and language upon the basis that words and speech patterns influence thought processes, and therefore, human actions. This exploratory study gives life to the developing theory of ecolinguistics set in the dynamic political district of Monteverde, Costa Rica. This paper will explore the results from thirty semi-structured, in-depth interviews that were held with a variety of community members: from farmers to artisans to politicians. Participants were asked about their relationship to Monteverde, changes that have occurred, hopes for the future, economics, education, and tourism among other themes. This paper explores narratives of identity, definitions of progress, and the disputed metaphor of paradise used within the community.

**KEY WORDS:** Ecolinguistics, Paradise, Progress, Monteverde, Costa Rica

### **PROLOGUE**

*1: Ella me dice que muchos sí usan ‘paraíso’ para Monteverde. Entonces sí estoy de acuerdo. Y yo digo que...*

*2: ¡Yo sí!*

*1: No estoy tan de acuerdo porque para mí es como un lugar perfecto donde no hay que cambiar absolutamente nada.*

*2: ¡Para mí lo es!*

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## INTRODUCTION

Our stories tell us about who we are as humans. They give a setting and backdrop where the events of lives take place, and they help us understand our values, goals and challenges. But stories are more than what is read before bedtime, happily folded between book covers. Stories and narratives exist in every one of us, shaping our ideas, dreams, perspectives, the ways we structure the past, fit into our present, and plan for our futures. Language and ecology may seem like unrelated disciplines, but it is becoming increasingly evident that the way “humans treat each other and the natural world is influenced by our thoughts, concepts, ideas, ideologies and worldviews and these in turn are shaped through language” (Stibbe 2015: 2).

Ecolinguistics is the analysis and critique of the stories beneath our language, and it uncovers how language can contribute to ecological displacement or destruction (Stibbe 2015).

Ecolinguistics “examines the influence of language on the life-sustaining relationships of humans with each other, with other organisms, and with the natural environment” (Ecolinguistics Association 2015). The need to understand what moves and motivates humans and what helps us relate to our world is increasingly critical today, as we witness the increase of human influence on the geography and ecosystems of the Earth.<sup>1</sup>

Monteverde, Costa Rica is a place alive with discourses. Stories of progress manifest themselves in various ways in this community through narratives of change and identity, as cultures and disciplines live in proximity in a dynamic natural and social environment (Vivanco 2001). Immigrant Quakers meet Ticos, ecotourism meets dairy farming, artisan cooperatives meet growing, globalized businesses, and biologists meet tourists between the gravel roads, farmlands, and mountains in this political district. These encounters and their histories create space for a multitude of interchanging narratives of *progress* and *place*.

In 2001, Luis Vivanco used an anthropological approach to study the stories and significances of the resplendent quetzal within the Monteverde community. *Pharomachrus mocinno*, a characteristic colorful bird of Central American and Southern Mexico, has become a commercialized representation of Monteverde; images of its brilliant colors and kingly tail are easily found in souvenir shops lining the streets. To understand the significance the quetzal holds in Monteverde, Vivanco walked with locals, listened to what they said, and combined the patterns and trends he found with a wide theoretical foundation of past research to conclude his investigation with lived realities of the Monteverde community at that time. Linguists, in their work to better understand communication and the role it plays in our lives, begin their investigations, like Vivanco, with a gathering of texts. These texts are then organized, sorted, and analyzed. Specific manifestations in the language that together can highlight patterns and themes are exposed. Patterns within the language, whether through framing techniques, metaphors, vocabulary use, or other manifestations are studied to find the “stories-we-live-by” or underlying messages we receive and live within every day (Stibbe 2015: 3). With the development of ecolinguistics, researchers may compare these discovered stories with an “ecosophy” or an eco-philosophy of their own and give a value or classification to stories that may be destructive or beneficial in regards to the environment and other values expressed within the ecosophy (Stibbe 2015).<sup>ii</sup>

In this study, similar techniques were used to explore language and the narratives found within and between the lines of ‘texts’. Narratives of progress and change led to discussions of movement — movement up, towards, or away: from one country to another or within one’s own home community. With movement from one place to another, through space, or through time, humans readily bring previous perceptions and imagined realities of what the new, or “other”

may be (Swanson 2003, Todorov 1999, Grudzinska 2009). These preconceived visions can block true sight of what really is and exists. They can blind one from seeing new ways of living, and can rob agency from the “Other,” replacing reality with mere perspective.

In “Discovery,” by Todorov (1999), “Latin American Geographies,” by Swanson (2003), and “Loneliness as Always: America” by Grudzinska (2009), stories are told of entrances, movement, and perceptions. In particular, these authors narrate how the European or Western eye constructed an image of Latin America primarily as a subjected land where the people, if worth noticing behind the grandiose foliage and landscapes, were lazy, dumb, or savage (Todorov 1999). In present day, these narratives of Latin America still have implications, and their distorting shadows can be evidenced in the “imagined geographies” of America conceived solely as bountiful place to come and vacation, drink rich coffee, extract resources, and lounge under a generous sun (Swanson 2003). Perceptions of economic systems have had large implications as well. Stories of capitalism, development, and what is “right” for a nation have resulted in the exploitation of peoples and places under the masks of several different economic theories (Pérez 2009). These “stories,” in their mixtures of preconception and reality, shed light on the lasting power of narratives that shape perceptions in meaningful and persistent ways.

In this paper I will discuss some of the stories of Monteverde that I encountered while interviewing community members. Specifically, I will discuss how perceptions of place are linked to ideas of progress and a metaphor of paradise in this community. The objectives of this paper are to bring the ecolinguistic theory presented in Stubbe’s *Ecolinguistics* (2015) to life with a case study of Monteverde, Costa Rica, and to better understand what narratives of progress exist in the Monteverde community and how these narratives manifest themselves within varied discourses.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

Monteverde, Costa Rica, is a political district of approximately 6,750 people nestled in the Tilarán Mountains in the province of Puntarenas.<sup>iii</sup> The area is surrounded by dairy farms, coffee plantations, and nature reserves for which it is globally recognized. Cloud forests and wildlife, including the charismatic and deeply symbolic quetzal, draw as many as 250,000 visitors yearly to the area where, beginning in the late 1980s, tourism began to replace dairy farming as the industry with the biggest percentage of local income (Vivanco 2001).

Encounters of cultures and subcultures within the Monteverde communities added another layer of depth to my research. Artifacts found in Monteverde suggest that people were living in the area from 3000 BC to 500AD, but the modern-day communities of Santa Elena, Cerro Plano, and “upper” Monteverde began to multiply after 1951 when a group of twelve Quaker families from Alabama relocated to Costa Rica. Purposefully removing themselves from a country that participates in war they added their cultural characteristics into the mix of the approximately twelve Costa Rican families that subsistence-farmed on the mountain. The population of Monteverde has grown exponentially as more and more people come to the area, fall in love with the people and the place, and decide to stay: what some call “The Monteverde Vortex.”

My research began with a detailed introduction to, and study of, various discourses that are present in the narratives of progress in Monteverde, Costa Rica. Through a combination of cultural studies, economics, natural and political sciences, and a review of literature on ecotourism, I built a theoretical foundation to explore the different dimensions present in the oral histories of Monteverde. I began my two months in the field conducting in-depth interviews with a variety of community members to gather narratives from multiple discourses. My research was conducted in two phases to allow for assessment and continual evaluation. I spoke with guides at

the reserves, economists, hotel owners, members of local government, authors, and artists among others. I continued, connecting with possible participants through networking while at the same time researching and contacting people with unique experiences.

Interviews were thirty minutes to one hour in length and semi-structured. Before the interviews were conducted, interviewees read and signed a consent form and agreed to be voice-recorded according to the Institutional Review Board processes of the Associated Colleges of the Midwest. The qualitative notes and transcriptions of these interviews comprise my data collection, and each interviewee was assigned a numerical reference code to protect their identity when quoted within the paper. The questions were constructed to be conversation starters without framing or guiding the direction in which I, as the researcher, hoped the conversation to go. I asked about several themes, including changes witnessed and an evaluation of those changes, conservation, economics, education, the influence of tourism on the community, and hopes for the future. In this paper I will focus on a narrow scope of the information gathered.

After the first ten interviews, I began the second phase of my research. I made a list of themes that had arisen from the material. First was the specialness of the place; some of the most poignant stories were histories of how people came to, or decided to stay in, Monteverde — stories of how Monteverde as a place impacted them, and how they formed an attachment. This transitioned to the idea of Monteverde as a *paradise*, a word that commonly appeared in interviews. Residents and newcomers alike expressed a deep love for Monteverde. This idea of paradise, however, is complicated, and disputed strongly even among coworkers and friends. To better understand this idea of Monteverde as paradise, I added questions that would lead the interviewee to talk more about how they define Monteverde: *What would you tell about Monteverde to a person who has never visited? How do you define a “local”? How is*

*Monteverde unique? And, is the use of the word “paradise” justified?* Upon further reflection, I decided that there were still some voices that I had not heard from, particularly more official or institutional voices, like a member of the local government or the police force. I purposefully sought out these voices and created questions that specifically pertained to their work or field of experience and expertise to aid me in understanding the patterns that were becoming apparent from interviews.

After the “texts” of the interviews were collected and transcribed, I narrowed down the material to focus on definitions and perceptions of Monteverde, definitions of progress, and the assessment of “paradise”. I created figures and charts to showcase numerically the frequency of words used in the answers to these questions to make poignant the aspects for the people I interviewed. Then I used Stibbe’s theory outlined in *Ecolinguistics: Language, Ecology and the Stories We Live By* (2015) and other texts to analyze these voices. This critical linguistic analysis built upon my foundation of discourses in order to analyze features such as vocabulary, how participants and events are represented, figures of speech, and appraisal patterns (Stibbe 2015).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Change has become routine in Monteverde. When I spoke with residents, in order to think about the future, it became evident that first it was necessary to think about the past. Although I went to learn about the concepts of progress within Monteverde, in fact, I learned about the history and hopes of a community under construction. Looking for narratives of progress in Monteverde uncovered a variety of stories that answer questions of who we were, are, and who we want to be. (See Figure 1, word cloud diagram of the transcribed interviews.)

### Definitions of Place

Inside the political district of Monteverde exist not only multiple, officially named communities (*e.g.* Santa Elena, Monteverde, Cerro Plano, San Luis) but also a wide variety of subcultures that are unofficially named, either by myself or by interviewees (*e.g.* original Ticos, original Quakers, artists, professional parents, transients, traveling teachers, farmers, *hoteleros*, and relocated workers). In order to understand present Monteverde, understanding origins is critical. Individuals inhabiting these groups tell varying narrations of how Monteverde began, starting at different time periods and highlighting different key actors, although the stories begin to converge in the 1980s when tourism comes into play. Despite all these differences, I found that the people of these subcultures build from a foundation of common identity to address what progress means to them.

Identities are constructed biographical stories in peoples’ minds that are “at least partially forged and resisted in language” and that “manifest themselves in particular ways” of communicating or behaving (Stibbe 2015:106). The major themes used to define an identity of Monteverde within interviews were community, nature, values, multiculturalism, education, beauty, the contested idea of paradise, and tourism. (See Figure 2, graph of these themes.) The following is a chart with these categories, the words included in the category, and selected quotes to illustrate how the words are used in context.

Category	Words Included, Times Used	Quotes
<b>COMMUNITY</b> (77)	People: 25, Community(ies): 20, <i>Gente</i> : 10, Quaker: 7, <i>Persona(s)</i> : 6, <i>Pueblo</i> : 4, <i>Familias</i> : 3, <i>Neighbors</i> : 2	“I’ve found community in lots of places but I’ve never been in a place like this” (58). “ <i>Casi todas las personas se conocen</i> ” (49).
<b>NATURE</b> (34)	<i>Clima</i> : 3, <i>Conservación</i> : 2, <i>Naturaleza</i> : 4, <i>Animales</i> : 2, <i>Animal</i> : 1, <i>Ecology</i> :2, <i>Natural</i> :4, <i>Reserve</i> : 2, <i>Verde</i> : 2, <i>Tierra</i> : 2, <i>Flora</i> : 3, <i>Fauna</i> : 3, <i>Ambiental</i> : 2, <i>Biodiversidad</i> : 2, <i>Biodiversity</i> : 1	“ <i>Una riqueza en todo los sentidos de naturaleza, servicios, gente</i> ” (59). “...a beautiful community physically, and the ecology, and the reserve” (52). “ <i>Monteverde es una tierra privilegiada: por su clima, por su flora, por su fauna, por su gente</i> ” (45).

<b>VALUES</b> (22)	Kind: 4, Simplicity: 3, Philosophy: 3, Peace: 3, Appreciation: 2, Meeting: 4, Heart: 3	“Probably the center of our community is our Quaker Meeting. And Quaker Meeting is based upon the principles of respect, and appreciation for each other and cooperation” (52). “I love being in a community that really reflects my values and you do not have to be Quaker to drink that in and be part of it. You need to believe in things like non-violence and simplicity and peace” (4).
<b>MULTI-CULTURALISM</b> (17)	Different: 5, Diverse: 3, World: 1, Multicultural: 3, Many: 3, Unique: 2	“It’s a unique, multicultural, dynamic, community that revolves around conservation” (26). “ <i>Una comunidad multicultural para mí es lo primero</i> ” (59).
<b>EDUCATION</b> (10)	School: 2, Opportunity: 3, University: 2, Courses: 2	“...an opportunity to educate people who come from all over the world to visit us. Through our reserve people go away often with more appreciation of the forest and ecology” (52). “There’s university courses going on so it isn’t just a cow farming place” (58).
<b>BEAUTY</b> (9)	Beautiful: 2, <i>Belleza</i> : 2, <i>Bonitas</i> : 2, <i>Bonita</i> : 3, Beauty: 1	“You come up and the beauty is everywhere” (10). “ <i>Parte de la belleza de Monteverde es la gente</i> ” (56).
<b>PARADISE</b> (7)	<i>Paraíso</i> : 7	“ <i>Para mí, es mi paraíso verde</i> ” (17). “ <i>Yo siempre digo que Monteverde es un paraíso. Cuando yo salgo, llego aquí en paraíso</i> ” (56).
<b>TOURISM</b> (7)	Tourists: 2, Tourism: 2, <i>Turismo</i> : 1, <i>Adventura</i> : 1, Tour: 1	“It’s very much in the present because of tourism” (58). “ <i>Un pueblo que ha tenido tenacidad y que ha sido arriesgado en ser pionero en manejar el turismo...con gente visionaria</i> ” (3).

These counts are taken from answers to only one question that was developed in the second half of my investigation. Therefore, not every participant, nor every variation of words that could fit under each subtitle, is included. Despite this, from this chart we begin to concretely develop a view of what stories the people of Monteverde live by. Additionally, we learn what are poignant areas of interest, and what words are instinctual first reactions. The quotes show how the concepts both complement and contradict one another. Some quotes mention three or four of the main factors, some focus on a single aspect; answers varied as conversations of history are oft to do. As interviews developed, the focus changed from what Monteverde is, a discourse of origins, to hopes for what Monteverde could be, shifting the context from past to future.

### Definitions of Progress

These hopes, although as numerous and varied as the interviewees, are found reflected within their discourse of progress. “How do you define progress?” I asked them. Their answers tie back to how they define Monteverde: a place where community and the environment are valued, a place where all life can live well. These grand themes appeared early on and overpowered any economic, or profit oriented answers that one might expect. (See Figures 3-5 for images and graphs from these answers). After words like ‘community’, ‘together’, ‘planet’, and ‘nature’, words like ‘responsibility’, ‘balance’, and ‘integrated’ were used frequently in the discussions of hopes for changes such as new sidewalks to maintain the “walking community” and more opportunities for education, both of residents and of visitors (52). One interviewee summed it up, “What does a raise in GDP mean for the planet?” (2). Any definition to be found, he tells me, will be a human-centric one, but that may be the best we can do at this time. He continues:

*Para mí, progreso es que más y más porcentaje de la población tiene alimento sano, tiene educación, tiene amor y tiene seguridad, tiene libertad. En la medida en que mayor porcentaje de la población mundial tiene estos elementos, estamos progresando. Entonces el progreso es económico, el progreso es cultural, es social; el progreso es espiritual. Y el progreso no tiene—no puede tener fronteras (2)<sup>iv</sup>*

This idea of a borderless progress is a beautiful image for Monteverde, a community where members think about and intend to find solidarity among and between the differing communities and subcultures.

Despite the geographic variations in development, residents of Monteverde, from San Luis to Santa Elena, have seen rapid growth and are looking for solidarity within that growth, increased quality of life, and the discernment and planning ability to maintain what is going well now. I asked about *increase*, and what I heard were hopes for “catching up” and “sustainability” along with recognition of ecological and social limits to growth. This is unique in development discourse in Latin America, and in the world, where historically *growth* has been paired with

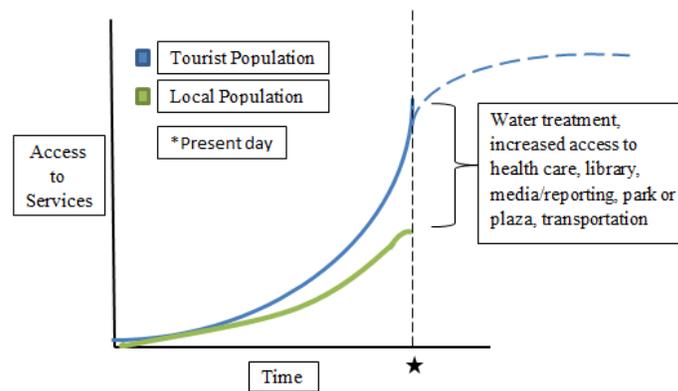
*good*. This evaluation has become linguistically and culturally engrained with positive associations linked to the metaphor of “going forward,” while “backwards” brings the opposite (Stibbe 2015: 84, 86-88). What is becoming increasingly evident, however, is that economic growth has not brought increased levels of happiness or wellbeing and is associated with ecological destruction (Stibbe 2015).

Not only linguists have thought about this. Chilean economist Manfred Max-Neef notes the “danger” of this association between *more* and *better*, *growth* and *good*. He writes about the deep connection between language and development, and calls for a richer, fuller discourse of these themes, “*Un lenguaje es, a la vez, producto y generador de una cultura... Si el lenguaje de nuestro desarrollo es pobre, nuestro desarrollo será pobre*” (Max-Neef 1988: 133)<sup>v</sup>. Residents of Monteverde seem to be breaking this engrained trend, or at least beginning the discussions to redefine what ‘development’ or ‘progress’ means for them in their unique contexts. They are conscious of the dangers of excessive growth because its negative effects have become visible in their communities, evidenced by increasing traffic and other environmental stresses.

Beginning in the late 1980s and early 1990s, neoliberal economic and political policies started to become dominant in Latin America, perhaps as a plausible escape route of the 1980s debt crisis or as an entrance into the perceived capital flow of an increasingly industrialized and globalized world (Gwynne 1997). In Costa Rica, involvement from organizations such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and USAID increased. This transitioned the country to an economy dependent on international – particularly U.S. – investment that came with some “strings attached,” requiring political and economic shifts in both public and private organization policies (Honey 2008: 162-164). While neoliberal policies and ideals vary substantially from country to country where they are implemented, emphasis on privatization,

markets, and individual freedoms may have had a profound effect on the ways ‘progress’ is defined all across the Americas (King 2010).

Today, at least 94 percent of Monteverde’s economy is based on the effects of tourism, in contrast to the 20-22 percent of Costa Rica’s foreign exchange earnings that are due to tourism, or the 7-8 percent of GDP (Honey 2008: 164). If “ecotourism has helped create the self-image of Costa Ricans,” and is “now their self-identity” as reported in Honey’s book on ecotourism and development, then this impact may be even stronger in Monteverde where almost everything “revolves around tourism,” as one interviewee phrased it (Honey 2008: 161). Whether the expansion and integration into global markets, domination of tourism as an economic factor, or other manifestations of neoliberal policies have left residents satisfied with the state of things is a different matter, however. The graph below depicts perceptions of access to services for local versus tourist populations over time, based upon the impressions I heard throughout interviews:



The blue line symbolizes access and services for tourist populations, the green access and services for locals and residents of Monteverde. While both lines have increased, with time, the line for the locals has fallen behind that of tourists. Services like water treatment and increased access to health care make up the breach between the tourist populations and local populations at the present day. These services, in fact, often experience stress *due to* the tourist populations

(Honey 2008: 188). The dashed line, extending beyond the present day vertical line, is a representation of hopes for future maintenance and sustainability as opposed to following the trend of exponential growth. One interviewee expresses these sentiments:

*Yo pienso que empezó, ese cambio empezó para el bien de Monteverde; pero lo que está pasando es que, ahora... nosotros estamos pensando demasiado en la población turística y no en la población de la gente que vive aquí (32).<sup>vi</sup>*

Another adds:

There's [sic] beautiful hotels and beautiful restaurants, and that kind of thing, and you'll hear this again and again, but there's[sic] very few services for the people that live here. We don't have a—every town in Costa Rica has a football field, and a park, and a plaza and all those sort of normal things of a regular town that grows up as a town (26).

Perhaps in Monteverde 'progress' does not mean an ever-increasing arrow heading upwards. Perhaps progress means letting those lines come together and equalize, and then continue with less growth. While these quotes make evident that there is room for improvement in this continually-changing community, the perception of the state of the place changes depending on whom you ask. A majority of my interviewees, in fact, used the word 'paradise' to describe their home.

### The Metaphor of Paradise

The idea of paradise is far from simple. Its definition was not agreed upon by interviewees, yet was utilized across subcultures and disciplines in Monteverde. Ecolinguistics asks us to look a little deeper into our language to see what power and meanings we might be unknowingly advancing. Before I included a question to directly address the word 'paradise' during interviews, it was used by the majority of my interviewees. It is a word visible on websites and found in the discourse of tourists. When applied to a community that is as dynamic and diverse as Monteverde, the metaphor of paradise leads to an analysis of who, in fact,

perceives Monteverde as paradise, and what do they mean when they use the term. From ‘yes, this is (and has been) my paradise,’ to ‘parts of it are paradise,’ to ‘definitely not paradise’, the word brought forth emotions along with these here-simplified answers. Of the sixteen participants who received the direct question about paradise, 56 percent said that, yes, Monteverde is paradise. Twenty-five percent mentioned specific parts to be paradise, particularly the reserves and nature, or particularly to foreigners or newcomers. Only 12 percent said that Monteverde is not a paradise, and 6 percent did not give a clear response.

Metaphors are powerful linguistic and cognitive actors. They tell a poignant and memorable story through the use of a “frame” that triggers images and constructions from a “specific, concrete and imaginable area of life to structure how a clearly distinct area of life is conceptualized” (Stibbe 2015: 47). In this case, ‘paradise’ is the ‘source frame’ whose characteristics and associations are mapped onto the ‘target frame’: Monteverde. When this metaphor is used it may create analogical reasoning patterns that very vividly place images of what paradise means to the user or listener on top of the lived reality of Monteverde. Ecolinguistics plays a role in “exposing and questioning the metaphors we live by” and giving a space for discussion about what the implications of this metaphor may be (Stibbe 2015: 81). For example, images of paradise – such as an eternal relaxing vacation or the golden gates of heaven – might overshadow the realities of stressed environmental resources or a lack of health services in the communities of Monteverde. The 12.5 percent of respondents that strongly debate the metaphor of paradise draw special attention. What makes them disagree with the majority? One of the original Quakers shared her perspective on the use of the word:

No, that’s obviously newer people! Anybody that lives here a long time knows that this is not paradise! There is no paradise. You’ve got to work at keeping things going smoothly, and relationships, and at getting work done (64).

She had laughed aloud a long time before giving this response. She came to live in Monteverde in 1951 when there was no road, no electricity or water, none of the services that make paradise a reality for tourists today. Her experience of the necessity to confront large challenges with effort and intentionality made it clear to her that no, Monteverde is not a paradise. Others agree with her, but make the clarification that at one point in their lives, Monteverde was paradise to them. In this quote, a man used past tense to explain: “*Cuando yo vine a vivir aquí hace más de veinte años, pensé que era un paraíso. Sí. Y claro que sí es justificado, claro*” (60).<sup>vii</sup> He goes on to clarify that to him it now depends on where you are within the zone. The busy, increasingly traffic-filled triangle of Santa Elena is not paradise, but in the reserves, it is. Many others follow this line of reasoning. Paradise can be conceived as “nature”, and that is something the people of Monteverde are more than likely to comment on, whether or not they use the word ‘paradise.’

After another interviewee confirmed that, yes, Monteverde was paradise, I asked her to expand her answer: *What are some the things that make it a paradise?* “Interacting with nature,” she replied (50). This simple answer, given without hesitation, shines a light towards a growing base of research between the fields of positive psychology and environmental studies. Growing evidence tells us that increased time in nature can improve psychological well-being, increase feelings of autonomy and connectedness, and act as attention restoration therapy (ART) leaving the subject refreshed, revitalized and re-energized (Ryan 2009) (Kasser 2009). It is possible that the residents, and visitors alike, experience a greater amount of these benefits in Monteverde which leads them to consider the place a “paradise” or a “natural” or “green” paradise that unconsciously has affected their psyche, making them feel good.

The combination of rosy first impressions and the biologically unique forests make ‘paradise’ a term that may be especially utilized by the growing tourist population in

Monteverde. A novel experience without deep entrenchment, or a vacation experience, can both be reasons for which ‘paradise’ is more easily used. “*Los extranjeros vienen a acá y esto es un paraíso porque nunca habían estado, tal vez, en un bosque nuboso,*” explains an interviewee (61).<sup>viii</sup> The idea of paradise may be another story that has come to be placed upon the populations of a developing country, told again and again, until the population comes to believe it as well. One woman, a long-time resident of the community, who now has economic success through her own business that she never dreamed to have, expresses no complications with the word “paradise”. To her, it is the story she and her community tell, “*Sí. Yo creo que también, entre nosotros, muchas veces hemos dicho que este lugar es un paraíso porque, para nosotros, es muy bonito y es un lugar progresivo [sic]*” (15).<sup>ix</sup> This interviewee narrated how she arrived in Monteverde with nothing but the hopes of making a living, which she was able to do due to tourism. She mirrors her success, or her ‘progress,’ onto the story of the community’s progress. Her opportunities have made Monteverde a place where dreams can be realized, and that transforms a regular town into a paradise.

The idea of paradise cannot be simplified to one definition or one way of understanding, however. In the following transcription two women, both long-time residents of the area, discuss, and disagree, about whether or not the term ‘paradise’ can be used:

*1: ¡Para mí la palabra ‘paraíso’ es como un lugar perfecto donde no hay que corregir absolutamente nada! Entonces no. [Preguntó a su amiga] ¿Ud. qué cree? ¿Qué significa para Ud. ‘paraíso’?*

*2: Un lugar muy hermoso, perfecto, más que perfecto.*

*1: Es que ella me dice que sí...que muchos sí usan ‘paraíso’ para Monteverde. Entonces sí estoy de acuerdo. Y yo digo que...*

*2: ¡Yo sí!*

*1: No estoy tan de acuerdo porque para mí es como un lugar perfecto donde no hay que cambiar absolutamente nada—*

*2: ¡Para mí lo es!*

1: *—Y no es cierto. Tenemos mucho como, bueno, como lugar tal vez, como lugar, lugar sí. ¡Si lo veo como comunidad, tenemos mucho que hacer todavía!*

2: *Sí, pero, no sé cuál es la pregunta de ella, si es de adentro hacia afuera o de afuera hacia adentro.*

1: *Sí, es que no sé también en el sentido en que lo ha utilizado la otra gente.*

2: *Bueno, a ver. Como ambiente o de lo que tenemos, para mí es paraíso, las montañas, ¡todo!*

1: *Sí, sí, como lugar para mí es un paraíso; pero como comunidad tenemos, uf, mucho que trabajar.*

2: *... Monteverde, como comunidad, está haciendo muchos proyectos, está trabajando en adaptación y mitigación entonces. Creo que eso nos hace —*

1: *¡Ser diferentes!*

2: *.... Estamos bien. Somos un paraíso. (59 and 24).<sup>x</sup>*

“I don’t know if the question is from the outside-in or from the inside-out.” That is the question. Are we defining ourselves? Or are we taking the definition that comes from the outside? What if the definition of Monteverde becomes ‘paradise’ because somebody new, somebody who has lived elsewhere says it is? An erasure pattern is a “linguistic representation of an area of life as irrelevant, marginal or unimportant through its systematic absence, backgrounding or distortion” (Stibbe 2015: 146). By the dominance of the outsider’s story of paradise, there is a risk that the voices of Monteverde residents are erased or masked into a different form. What if the metaphor of paradise becomes so ingrained into the stories the people of Monteverde live by, that they stop seeing what might need work or change in their community? What if the definition stops at, “we live in paradise,” as one resident put it, nothing more to add? (50).

The construction of paradise may also lead to an analysis of exclusivity and belonging. “When you find paradise you kind of want to be the last one in and shut the door behind you,” one interviewee told me, “But that’s not really possible!” (4). The Quaker population in Monteverde intended from their beginnings to have isolation for their community. After leaving the United States due to conflicting personal convictions with the government, living in an

island, or a nearly inaccessible mountain community, of their own creating was an attractive idea. But the door to tourism and outsiders opened with the creation of the nature reserves, and the influence of the “outside” in Monteverde has been, ever since, extremely prevalent.

Residents hold different perspectives on the consequences of these newcomers. One resident told me the influx of new people was a blessing for the community. Visitors and temporary residents bring fresh perspectives and energy so the community does not become “so ingrown” into their old ideas and ways of being (64). But others have doubts about the constantly fluctuating populations entering the community with their own visions and plans for what the community “needs”. These opinions may overpower those of the people who know Monteverde best. One interviewee says:

You have a huge group of people that are here short-term, transient, and they all have their expectations of what Monteverde should be like, and try to shift things, or maneuver things, or change things to make—to help it fit their vision, their utopic vision, of what Monteverde should be (38).

This influx population and their economic power (and other types of power), can cause conflict. “Who really knows how it’s done here?” she asks (38). This raises a question of community resilience. How does a community stay who it is, how does it hold on to its identity and values with a continual influx of different opinions and perspectives? Does a community want to stay unchanged, or will it find richness in exposure to the ‘Other’?

Some residents of Monteverde have found an answer to this question with another metaphor. In this second vision Monteverde is not referred to as a paradise, but as a classroom; a classroom of two ways where visitors learn from residents and residents learn from visitors. This idea can be seen in the way residents think about the tourism of the area:

This is tourism that's based on ecology, it's based on education, it's based on learning; it's based on respect for the area. It's not perfect by any means. There's lots of problems. But there's this underlying desire for there to be a different kind of tourism here (26).

A *classroom* might be a better metaphor for Monteverde than *paradise*. A classroom, too, is a special place. It is a place where people of different backgrounds and perspectives meet and actively try to create something together, try to advance together, and try to learn from each other. A community is created in a classroom. People have different goals and reasons for going to the classroom, but once they are there seated together, their goals align under a common experience. A classroom can be a place where history is critical but at the same time, a place where sleeves are rolled up and people get down to the work of not only discussing, but creating what they want for the future. Some people come to the classroom knowing they will leave, but when they do, they will take that information, those experiences, with them to their next place. A classroom does not just exist within its walls. When a community loves a place, as when a person loves another, they want the best for it. They see its beauty, its blessings, and those are what they want to tell, perhaps especially to a foreign stranger with a voice recorder. But Monteverde, like any place or any person, has its challenges and needs just as it has its truly beautiful aspects. When we expose and analyze the metaphor of paradise and when we think about the possibility of the metaphor of classroom, perhaps the narratives that surround Monteverde, that fill the minds of the residents and visitors, will become a more complete picture—perhaps a truer story of this community in progress.

## CONCLUSIONS

A simple questionnaire can open a discourse about how a community defines itself and where it hopes to be in the future; such questions and discussion can promote consensus and help

create clarity in regards to community planning and development. Although we do not hope to have one rigid definition, one narrative, that everybody conforms to, there is value in laying out the trends and commonality found in what a community says it is and hopes to be. What brings us together? What will help us become who we want to be? The communities and individuals in Monteverde have been creators of and witnesses to drastic change. They have seen the benefits and the costs of these changes manifest themselves in their community, and they have opened their arms to the ideas, inputs, and influences of the world, from down the mountain and around the globe.

As the people of Monteverde understand very well, faced with global environmental challenges of the day, planning and organization can help make homes and communities be places that reflect what we are and what we want to be. A discussion may precede a written plan, which may precede actions. Monteverde has developed rapidly, and despite that fact, it still does not have a *Plan Regulador*, (a document that would legally dictate where certain types of structures and how many may be built), and despite the 250,000 visitors arriving annually, Monteverde has found ways to consciously maintain values like sense of community, environmental awareness, and education.

There is great value to further research in the developing field of ecolinguistics around the world and in Monteverde. Further advancement and study can help the places we inhabit develop as communities that know their stories, craft their stories, and use these narratives to continue in a path that follows a philosophy of their own thoughtful design.

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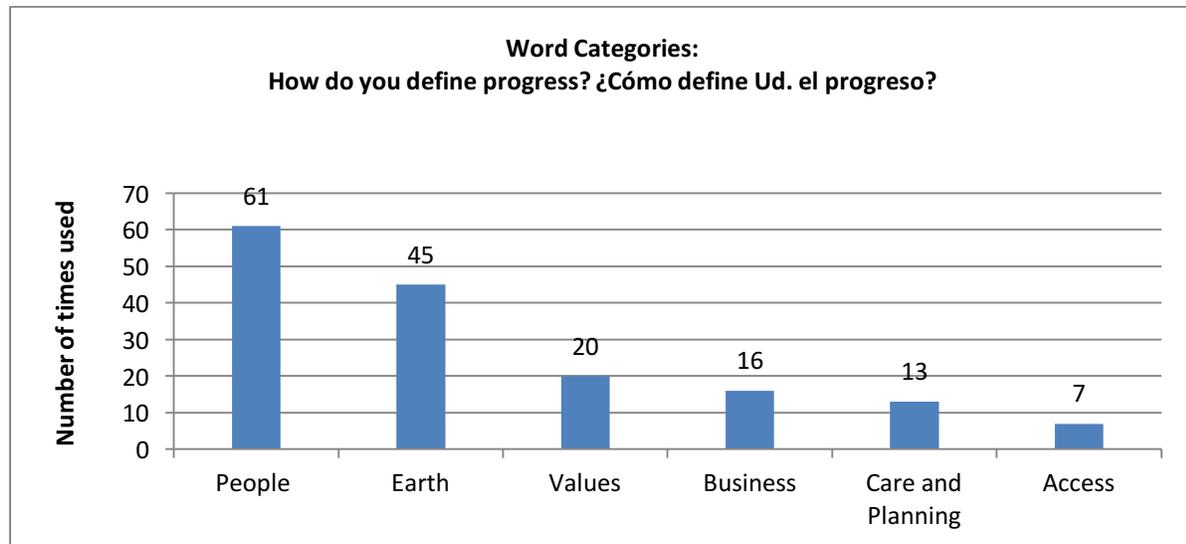


Figure 4. Themes in descending order: How do you define progress?

Category	Words Included	Quotes
People	<i>gente</i> :15, <i>humana</i> : 12, <i>población</i> 9, <i>comunidad</i> : 9, <i>community</i> : 5, <i>people</i> : 4, <i>social</i> : 4, <i>everybody</i> : 3, <i>everyone</i> : 3	“...nos beneficiamos de una forma más integral, y que nos permita crecer como comunidades, no solo individualmente, sino como pueblo”(3.) “Whatever steps we need to take so that everyone can move forward”(5).
Earth	<i>planeta</i> : 9, <i>planet</i> : 1, <i>recursos</i> : 8, <i>basura</i> : 5, <i>ambiente</i> : 5, <i>environment</i> : 1, <i>natural</i> : 4, <i>naturaleza</i> : 2, <i>ecosistemas</i> : 4, <i>sostenible</i> : 4, <i>sostenibilidad</i> : 2	“El progreso humano debería contribuir y debe ser totalmente interdependiente con la mejor salud del planeta, de la vida en el planeta”(2). “Living more harmoniously with the earth and the planet and ourselves.” “Para mi progreso significa vivir en equilibrio con el ambiente” (17).
Values	<i>responsabilidad</i> : 5, <i>sacrificar</i> : 5, <i>integral</i> : 4, <i>together</i> : 3, <i>spiritual</i> : 3	“Para mí el progreso tiene que ser un avancé con responsabilidad” (6). “...is that really the kind of progress we want? Is that the values we want our kids to have or is it that one more of working together, being a part of- making that sense of a community, of an extended family where we live together, we work together” (9).
Business	<i>Business</i> : 4, <i>money</i> : 4, <i>económico</i> : 4, <i>recurso</i> : 1, <i>costas</i> : 3	“Pero debe ir equitativo, progresamos económicamente pero no costas de la ambiente” (3). “Primero no lo vería en una moda económica, o no solamente económica. Ud. puede tener un progreso económica pero espiritual muy, muy bajo para decirlo” (80).
Care and Planning	<i>Pensar</i> : 5, <i>responsabilidad</i> : 5, <i>experience</i> : 3	“Debemos tener un pocito de calma y pensar. Y tratar de hacerlo con cierta responsabilidad” “You will be in charge of your own ship and your own learning!
Access	<i>Salud</i> : 4, <i>Infraestructura</i> : 3	“Que tenemos los servicios básicos para poder este, mantener la salud. Y al salud va todo lo que es, no solamente, físico, sino también mental.” “De lo que vamos avanzando en infraestructura, en educación, en

		<i>mejor atención al visitante turista. Debe ser como un balance. En lo económico, en lo social y lo ambiental” (3).</i>
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**Figure 5. Chart and usage of themes: How do you define progress?**

## Appendix C: Questionnaire

### English

1. How many years have you lived in Monteverde?
2. Have you lived in other places? Which ones? What is your opinion of these places?
3. Has Monteverde changed since you've lived here?
4. In your opinion, have the changes been mostly positive or negative? Why?
5. What would you like to see in the next years in your community? What hopes for the future do you have?
6. Do you think your children will stay in Monteverde when they reach adulthood or will they leave for another place?
7. What type of involvement do you have with your community? How do you perceive diversity in the community of Santa Elena/Monteverde?
8. What are the most distinct economic activities in Monteverde and what are their impacts on the community?
9. In what ways have the nature reserves around Monteverde impacted you?
10. What relation does tourism have with development in your community?
11. What are some areas of opportunity you see for your community?
12. Are there any stories or anecdotes that you would tell your children or friends about your relation with Monteverde?
13. What are some of the stories or legends that you hear about Monteverde when you speak with people from other places?
14. How do you define progress?

### Español

1. *¿Cuántos años ha vivido en Monteverde?*
2. *¿Ha vivido en otros lugares? ¿Cuáles? ¿Cuál es su opinión sobre esos lugares?*
3. *¿Ha cambiado Monteverde desde que Ud. vive aquí?*
4. *¿En su opinión, los cambios han sido mayormente positivos o negativos? ¿Por qué?*
5. *¿Qué le gustaría ver en los próximos años en su pueblo? ¿Qué esperanzas en relación con el futuro tiene Ud.?*
6. *¿Cree Ud. que sus hijos se quedarán en Monteverde cuando crezcan o que saldrán hacia otro lugar?*
7. *¿Qué tipo de involucramiento tiene Ud. con la comunidad? (¿Con cuáles grupos está relacionada Ud.? Habla un poco sobre su lugar de empleo.)*
8. *¿Cómo percibe Ud. la diversidad en la comunidad de Santa Elena/Monteverde?*
9. *¿Cuáles son las actividades económicas más distintivas de la zona y cuál es su impacto en la comunidad?*
10. *¿De qué modo lo han impactado a Ud. las reservas naturales alrededor de Monteverde?*
11. *¿Qué relación tiene el turismo con el desarrollo de su comunidad?*

12. *¿Cuáles áreas de oportunidad ve Ud. en su comunidad? (Lista para explicar: el potencial y los obstáculos de la comunidad)*
13. *¿Hay alguna historia o anécdota que Ud. les contaría a sus hijos (o amigos) sobre su relación con Monteverde?*
14. *¿Cuáles son algunas de las historias, cuentos o leyendas sobre Monteverde que Ud. oye cuando habla con gente de otros lugares?*

*Nuevas:*

1. *Si alguien le pidiera definir Monteverde o hablar un pocito de cómo es Monteverde ¿qué diría?*
2. *¿De qué manera es Monteverde un lugar único o especial?*
3. *¿Podría Ud. hablar sobre sus opiniones de los caminos de MV? ¿Qué piensa sobre el discurso en torno a estos caminos? ¿Qué quiere ver en los próximos años en este tema?*
4. *Alguna gente ha usado la palabra “paraíso” cuando habla sobre Monteverde. ¿Es justificada esta palabra?*
5. *¿Podemos decir que estos cambios son “progreso”?*
6. *¿Es el turismo de Monteverde diferente que el turismo en otras partes? (en el país o mundo)*
7. *¿Cómo es una persona local?*

**Endnotes:**

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<sup>i</sup> Ecolinguistics is an emerging field for which a broad history of previous field research or case studies does not exist. However, there is a base of theoretical ecolinguistics that has been growing since Einar Haugen wrote his 1972 essay “The Ecology of Language” linking language, its setting, and environment (Haugen, 1972). Gaining momentum in the 1990’s with M.A.K. Halliday’s “New Ways of Meaning” (1990), environmentalism was mixed into the blend and language was increasingly seen not only as a mere describer of reality, but as an agent that creates it. Linguists were called to think of the implications of language in terms of 21<sup>st</sup> century issues (Halliday, 1990). As awareness is raised, ecolinguistics and the relationship of language to ecology is starting to be studied within disciplines of “ethno-ecology, cultural ecology, anthropology, and the ecology of language” (Fischer, 2015)

<sup>ii</sup> An ecosophy is, “an ecological philosophy, i.e. a normative set of principles and assumptions about relationships among humans, other forms of life and the physical environment” (Stibbe, 2015).

<sup>iii</sup> Although the term “Monteverde” is commonly used to refer more specifically to the Quaker settlement or to a biological region, for this paper I will use this term referring to the wider political district including the communities of Santa Elena, Cerro Plano, and San Luis where my interviews took place.

<sup>iv</sup> For me, progress is that a greater and greater percentage of the population has healthy food, education, love and safety, that they have freedom. In this way, if the greater percentage of the world’s population has these elements we are progressing. Progress is economical, progress is cultural, it’s social, and it’s spiritual. And progress doesn’t have — it cannot have — borders.

<sup>v</sup> Language is, at the same time, both product and generator of culture... If the language of our development is poor, or lacking, our development will be lacking.

<sup>vi</sup> I think that it started, this change started for the better of Monteverde. But what is happening now... I think we are thinking too much of the tourist population and not of the population of people that live here.

<sup>vii</sup> When I came to live here more than twenty years ago, I thought it was a paradise. Yeah. Of course it is justified. Of course.

<sup>viii</sup> Foreigners come here and this is a paradise because they never have been, perhaps, in a cloud forest.

<sup>ix</sup> Yes. I think that also among ourselves, many times we have said that this place is a paradise, because, for us, it is very beautiful, and is a progressive place.

<sup>x</sup> 1. To me the word 'paradise' is like a perfect place where you don't have to correct absolutely anything! Then, no. [*Asks her coworker*] What do you think? What does paradise mean to you?

2. A very beautiful, perfect place. More than perfect.

1. She told me that many people use 'paradise' for Monteverde and if I agree. And I say that...

2. I think so!

1. I don't agree because for me it is like a perfect place where you don't have to change absolutely anything—

2. For me it is [paradise]!

1. —And that's not true! We have much, well, as a place perhaps, place yes. But if I look at it as community we have a lot to do still!

2. Yeah, but, I don't know if this was her question, if she's asking from the outside in or the inside out.

1. Yeah, I don't know either about the way that other people were using it.

2. Well, if you look at the environment or what we have, for me it's paradise... the mountains and everything!

1. Yeah, yeah, as a place for me it's a paradise, but as a community we have, whew! a lot to work on.

2. Monteverde as a community is doing a lot of projects, it's working in adaptation and mitigation. Therefore I think that that makes us—

1. Be different!

2. Yeah... We're alright. We are a paradise.