

INNOVATIONS SERIES

Innovations in education

Remote teaching

Edited by Graham Stanley

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Contents

Foreword	
Gabriela Kaplan.....	3
Acknowledgements	
Graham Stanley.....	5
REMOTE LANGUAGE TEACHING	
1 Introduction to remote language teaching	
Graham Stanley.....	8
2 Materials design for remote language teaching	
Verónica Pintos.....	13
3 Management of a remote teaching centre	
Robert Chatfield.....	18
REMOTE LANGUAGE TEACHING: <i>Ceibal en Inglés</i>	
4 <i>Ceibal en Inglés</i> : Innovation, teamwork and technology	
Gabriela Kaplan and Claudia Brovetto	28
5 Student voice in remote language learning	
Silvia Rovegno.....	36
6 What skills do <i>Ceibal en Inglés</i> remote teachers need?	
Verónica Pintos.....	43
6.1 On being a remote teacher (case study)	
Verónica Pintos.....	48
7 The experience from the other side of the screen: <i>Ceibal</i> classroom teachers	
Silvia Rovegno.....	51
7.1 From classroom teacher to English teacher (case study)	
Silvia Rovegno.....	58
8 Team teaching: making remote learning possible	
Verónica Pintos and Silvia Rovegno	61
8.1 Team teaching takes the stage (case study)	
Silvia Rovegno and Verónica Pintos.....	66
9 Teacher mentoring in the context of <i>Ceibal en Inglés</i>	
Gabriela Kaplan and Gabriela Rodríguez	69
9.1 The school, the community and the <i>Ceibal en Inglés</i> mentor	
Graham Stanley.....	73
10 Remote English teaching to rural schools	
Silvia Rovegno	76
11 Quality management of <i>Ceibal en Inglés</i>	
Gonzalo Negrón, Graham Stanley and David Lind	78
11.1 Peer observation for remote teacher development (case study)	
Willy Cardoso.....	87

12	Managing quality in a remote teaching centre Verónica Pintos.....	91
13	Learning assessment in <i>Ceibal en Inglés</i> Silvia Rovegno.....	97
14	How evaluation and assessment are intrinsic to <i>Ceibal en Inglés</i> Cecilia Marconi and Claudia Brovetto.....	105
15	Remote English teacher action research (case study) Silvia Rovegno.....	114
16	Inclusive practices in <i>Ceibal en Inglés</i> Silvia Rovegno.....	119
	16.1 Catering for visually impaired students in remote lessons (case study) Silvia Rovegno.....	124
	16.2 Keeping primary students safe when using LMS (case study) Verónica Pintos.....	127
REMOTE LANGUAGE TEACHING: Other projects		
17	Teaching Spanish remotely into the UK Pablo Toledo.....	134
18	Language for resilience: remote teaching of Spanish for refugees in Argentina Leonor Corradi.....	138
19	Language for Resilience: remote teacher training to Iraq Verónica Pintos and Silvia Rovegno.....	142
20	<i>Cauhtémoc Connected</i> : remote language teaching to Mexican secondary schools Verónica Pintos and Julieta Cabrera.....	145
	Research methodology.....	149
	Glossary.....	152
	Contributors.....	154

Foreword

In 2012 *Ceibal en Inglés* was taking its first steps in pursuit of two main objectives: the teaching of English to students and teachers in 4th, 5th and 6th grades in Uruguayan primary schools.

The incorporation of technology in education, especially the use of videoconferencing equipment to connect teachers and students, institutes and schools, and from its onset organizations such as Plan Ceibal and The British Council, has proved that above and beyond the achievement of our teaching goals, an educational community has been created and flourished.

In this educational community students are the main focus of attention, and teachers work collaboratively and cooperatively, paying little attention to restrictions imposed by geographic, linguistic, or cultural barriers. The presence of technology liberates remote and classroom teachers from their comfort zones, and enables them to meet challenges, to find new pedagogies, new forms of teaching and learning, and new alliances among themselves and with their students.

This process of deep change for all individuals in the programme has been enabled by the natural

formation of the *Ceibal en Inglés* community. The sheer novelty of the methodology urged each one of us: teachers; administrators; mentors; quality managers; institute coordinators; lesson plan writers; researchers, to talk; discuss; exchange views and ideas, and thus create a community. The transformation has been challenging and arduous, but necessary. An educational programme which bends the walls of the classroom and enables knowledge to permeate from the outside through the figure of the remote teacher, empowered by the guidance, support and capacity to facilitate learning that the classroom teachers provide, had to be understood and its main elements have begun to find articulation.

I sincerely hope the information in this Remote Teaching book may illustrate for the reader the long and winding road all have travelled. A road from perception of cultural barriers to construction of intercultural skills, from isolation in the classroom to cooperation, from a worldview mediated by one language to a world with a plurality of voices, sharing one sole aim: our students' learning.

Gabriela Kaplan

Ceibal en Inglés

Montevideo October 2018

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Graham Stanley

English for Educational Systems Lead, Americas
British Council

Remote language teaching

1

Introduction to remote language teaching

Graham Stanley

- Remote teaching can help overcome inequalities in education by providing access to teachers that otherwise would not be possible
- Remote language teaching differs from telecollaboration in that the main focus is on enabling language teaching and learning to take place rather than on intercultural collaboration
- In order to fully benefit from remote teaching, changes in pedagogy need to be adopted

Remote language teaching is the practice of teaching a language interactively via videoconferencing, which, according to Kaiser (2017a:11) is not only “slowly changing the entire landscape of ELT in Uruguay but is also poised to influence English language instruction throughout the world.” This chapter begins by examining remote teaching more closely and then describes the different dimensions of remote teaching analysed in more detail in other chapters of this book. The chapter concludes by suggesting how this relatively new way of teaching can benefit a range of different contexts, examples of which will also be discussed later in this volume

.What is remote language teaching?

Remote language teaching was the term adopted by the British Council and Plan Ceibal in 2012 to describe the type of teaching implemented in Uruguayan state primary schools to make up for the lack of teachers required to teach English, a project whose origin was described by Banegas (2013) and is explored in detail in part 2 of this book. Remote language teaching occurs when teachers are brought into the classroom virtually, using videoconferencing technology, in order to teach a language. The remote language teaching experience should replicate as far as possible the way teaching would be if the remote teacher (RT) were physically present in the classroom. In this sense it differs from videoconferencing used for *telecollaboration*, which Belz (2001) has described as the use of “internet communication tools ... in order to support social interaction, dialogue, debate, and intercultural exchange.”

O’Dowd (2018) states the roots of telecollaboration are found in the fields of applied linguistics and foreign language learning, and there is a large body of research and practice literature focusing on this type of virtual exchange, including the use of videoconferencing for such exchange. O’Dowd goes on to lament that this activity is known by a number of different terms, telecollaboration (Warschauer, 1995; Belz, 2001), online cultural exchange (O’Dowd, 2007; O’Dowd and Lewis, 2016), virtual exchange (Helm, 2015), collaborative online international learning (Rubin, 2016; Schultheis, Moore and Simon, 2015), internet-mediated intercultural foreign language education (Belz and Thorne, 2006), globally networked learning environments (Starke-Meyerring and Wilson, 2008) and e-tandem (O’Rourke, 2007) or teletandem (Leone and Telles, 2016).

The way remote language teaching differs from telecollaboration, however, and why it deserves different terminology, is that instead of supplementing a language teacher physically present in the classroom, the focus is most often on bringing a teacher virtually into the classroom via videoconferencing because there is no language teacher physically available.

Remote teaching is sometimes also referred to as *live online language teaching*. This term was used during the LANCELOT (Language Learning with Certified Live Online Teachers) European Union-funded project (Swertz et al., 2007) to refer to synchronous (i.e. *in real time*) computer-mediated communication for language teaching.

There is a general lack of research and practice literature about live online language teaching and learning, and “telecollaborative research often focuses on intercultural objectives rather than language learning” (Whyte and Gijzen, 2016). This book of research papers and case studies is an attempt to redress the balance, with this introductory chapter setting the scene for what will follow by describing the different elements that need to be taken into account for remote teaching to take place.

The impact of technology

As Link and Jinrong state, technology has now become so pervasive it is difficult to imagine language teaching without some form of technology (2018:1) and the development of this technology is now “blurring the boundary” between online and face-to-face language learning (2018:13).

Despite this, Selwyn has noted that “one of the conundrums of educational technology ... has been its relative lack of impact” (2016), with most educational technology doing little to alter the existing status quo. Remote teaching, however, is an example of what Selwyn (2016) calls “genuine disruption,” i.e. using technology to do fundamentally different things. Without the technology, remote teaching cannot take place, and when remote teaching is adopted because of a lack of teachers, as is the case in Uruguay, then it is an example of technology being used to enable teaching and learning that otherwise would not take place, and so the impact is clear.

Videoconferencing and CALL

The term videoconferencing was originally used to describe “a system where two or more participants in different locations can interact using specialised equipment through a high-speed Internet connection” (Smith, 2003). Nowadays, the term videoconferencing can also refer to software-based computer-mediated communication video tools such as *Skype* (www.skype.com) and *Zoom* (<http://zoom.us>), which facilitate synchronous communication, and which do not require special equipment.

The use of videoconferencing in CALL (computer-assisted language learning) is not new. As Goertler et al. (2018:21) mention, however, the focus of research has primarily been on language proficiency and intercultural competence. Most studies on the use of videoconferencing are small scale and usually necessitate the involvement of face-to-face language teachers in the classrooms where connections are made. There is little research on the effectiveness of a programme such as *Ceibal en Ingles* in Uruguay, where videoconferencing is being used for remote language teaching, i.e. as a replacement for face-to-face language teaching,

Loranc-Paszyk (2014) mentions the advantages that this communication mode offers. This and other studies (O’Dowd, 2000; Ozcelik and Zoltay-Paprika, 2010) have shown videoconferencing can increase motivation, help students develop oral skills and make lower-ability students more self-confident in speaking (Philipps, 2010:221–38).

Other research (McAndrew et al., 1996; O’Dowd, 2000; Chapelle, 2001; Wang, 2006; Lee, 2007; Katz, 2001; Kinginger and Belz, 2005; Ware and Kramersch,

2005; Wiedemann, 2006; Guichon, 2010; Bower and Kawaguchi, 2011; Kim and Craig, 2012) has shown that videoconferencing for speaking shows no significant differences in performance is comparable with face-to-face communication, and it is “an important contribution to the language learning field, especially ... as a means of enhancing the development of learners’ oral skills” (Loranc-Paszyk, 2015:191).

Normalisation

According to Bax (2011), the goal when using educational technology should be to, as far as possible, achieve ‘normalisation’, which Bax defines as the stage at which a technology becomes “in effect invisible, so seamlessly it is employed in our everyday practice in the service of language learning.” In remote language teaching, it could be said that normalisation can only occur if the students forget their teacher is on the other side of the screen. Barriers to normalisation of videoconferencing can occur, for example, if there are problems with the internet connection, if the teacher is unfamiliar with the technology, when the screen is too small or there are problems with the sound.

An important factor to approaching normalisation and the success of remote teaching is the reliability of the internet connection. As Whyte and Gijzen (2016) state, “the main challenge to a synchronous telecollaborative exchange is, obviously, technology,” and this is why in Uruguay fibre-optic cable connections are used, and the schools and remote teaching points have a minimum dedicated 2MB symmetrical (i.e. identical upload and download speeds) connection. This infrastructure means the connection is more reliable and, as a consequence, fewer classes are cancelled or interrupted than would otherwise be the case.

Motivation

Helm (2015) explains that research into the use of videoconferencing for language learning has shown “increased motivation and linguistic output” and continues by saying that studies on synchronous computer-based communication in general, by Blake (2000), Lee (2006) and Tudini (2003) reported “increased participation and interaction among students ... fostering language acquisition”.

Results of a study by Loranc-Paszyk (2015:195) suggest that videoconferencing “contributed to building up the participants’ self-confidence with regard to pragmatic competence in English” and “acted as a strong stimulus for speaking, as the majority of students agreed that they were more motivated to speak in this new context than during a standard conversation class.”

Remote teaching skills

Whyte and Gijzen (2016) argue that the burden is heavy on the teacher involved in telecollaboration, “far heavier than for a regular class ... with a number of challenges to be overcome”. This is just as true with remote teaching. For instance, the RT must manage the technology while teaching the lesson. With videoconferencing equipment, this means controlling both cameras with a remote control, zooming in and out and panning as the lesson requires; sharing the screen to show presentation software, images, videos and other resources; and troubleshooting connections, sound and other technical issues if and when they occur.

Technology aside, managing the classroom at a distance has its own challenges. Usually, teamwork is key to this, and the RT must work closely with the CT to ensure student behavior does not interrupt learning and that both teachers know what is going to happen during the lesson and so can work towards achieving learning outcomes.

Teacher training

As mentioned above, remote language teaching requires more from the teacher than standard classroom teaching. This means that professionals need support and time to learn to use new technology effectively. Preston (2017) mentions that any educational technology training “involves more than just learning how to use the technology; it should include support to understand how it can be used to improve learning.”

Remote language teachers also need training in how to present themselves on a screen so that they can best engage learners. This involves simple changes such as making eye contact through looking directly at the camera rather than at the monitor, as well as becoming aware of how to position themselves in front of a camera, and how to exaggerate gestures and body language.

Conclusion

Remote language teaching has the potential to create a positive impact on education, especially in contexts where there is a shortage of teachers. Although there is little evidence to suggest that remote language teaching *per se* leads to improvements in learning outcomes when compared to face-to-face classroom teaching, it is, however, a powerful enabler of learning. This is the conclusion presented in the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) Digital Technology report when discussing the benefits of educational technology use in general (EEF, 2016). This report also states that “introducing technology on its own is unlikely to have an impact; it must be accompanied by a change in

pedagogy to improve learning.” As will be seen in subsequent chapters, better results have been achieved when pedagogy has been adapted to take advantage of the unique affordances of remote language teaching.

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2

Materials design for remote language teaching

Verónica Pintos

- Remote language teaching can require specially designed and written materials in order to take advantage of the teaching and learning context and delivery method (i.e. videoconferencing).
- Commercially available coursebooks were found inappropriate for the remote language teaching contexts examined.

Introduction

This chapter examines the language-learning materials used for two remote language teaching projects: *Ceibal en Inglés* and *Cauhtémoc Connected*. The first of these is a project concerned with teaching English to primary school children in Uruguay via videoconferencing, whereas *Cauhtémoc Connected* is for secondary school students learning English in *Delegación Cauhtémoc*, Mexico City. After a brief discussion of principles of materials design for teaching online, the materials for each of these projects is analysed in turn. Finally, general conclusions of materials design for remote teaching is made, based on the experience of these projects.

Research strategy

The materials for each of the two projects and associated relevant documentation was analysed for this chapter. The materials writers and other relevant stakeholders were interviewed in order to gain insight into the development of the materials. Remote teachers using the materials were also interviewed to learn how they used the materials. In the following section, the findings are reported, with the materials for each of the projects examined.

CALL distance learning materials

Although published coursebooks are typically used as language-learning materials, Nunan and Lamb state that “anything that exists within the classroom can be a resource for learning” (1996:179) and Tomlinson (2011:2) says that language-learning materials can comprise “anything which is done by writers, teachers or learners to provide source of language input.” This is particularly relevant when it

comes to materials for remote teaching, as the materials designer can, for example, incorporate a wide range of resources available via the internet.

Originally, distance learning materials for Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) were simply digitised versions of paper-based texts (Odetti, 2016). Nowadays, although these “materials can be seen as sharing many of the features of non-CALL materials, they also have a number of unique features largely due to the materiality of the medium” (Reinders and White, 2010:2). They include “websites, software, courseware, online courses and virtual learning environments” and can be more complex than “materials conceptualised in face-to-face classroom settings” (ibid).

CALL materials for young learners

Particular care needs to be taken when choosing or developing materials for young learners. Nuñez Pardo and Téllez Téllez (2009:173) state that “the effectiveness of materials used for language teaching depends largely on how meaningful, relevant and motivating they are to the learners.” According to Reinders and White (2009:6) CALL materials can “resemble the types of resources especially younger learners use in everyday life,” and can “include activities that are difficult or impossible to achieve using other learning materials, such as moving objects across the screen (matching), recording one’s voice etc.”

RLT materials in context: materials design for *Ceibal en Inglés*

There are three main factors that shaped the design of materials for *Ceibal en Inglés*, a programme for 9-11-year-old primary children that is explored in detail in other chapters of this book. The first of these was the need for materials to take advantage of the affordances of the videoconferencing equipment used in *lesson A* (the remote lesson). The materials also needed to be digital, accessed via a learning management system (LMS), and available for students to use on their laptops. Finally, as the follow-on practice lessons (*lessons B and C*) were to be facilitated by

classroom teachers without the need for them to know English, scripted lesson plans available in Spanish for these teachers to follow needed to be created (Banfi and Rettaroli, 2014). This meant the materials were created from scratch, which took some time.

Syllabus

The academic design for the *Ceibal en Inglés* project started with the writing of a detailed syllabus for grade 4 and an outline for grades 5 and 6, as the project was piloted with 4th grade students. Banegas (2013:182) describes how the authors “drew on curricular content to teach English and established curricular and procedural bridges with the Uruguayan primary school curriculum,” which led to the development of “lessons and materials which responded to learners’ interests and context.”

Later, the detailed syllabi for 5th and 6th grades were developed. One of the writers recalled the first stages of designing these documents: “We checked the primary school curriculum in Uruguay to see what 5th and 6th grade were learning as far as science, history, and geography were concerned. We first thought of approaching it from a communicative point of view, that is – thinking of functions – what students can do, what students can express, what they can do with language. However, our finished syllabi followed more of a structural-lexical approach because we found the teachers would be more familiar with this type of approach”. Functions were also made a focus so that “students would have to do something with that language, that structure and those lexical items” and they would “focus on discourse, not just grammar or lexis” and they would “learn how to think, learn how to communicate, how to respect one another at the intercultural level” (interview with lesson plan writer, 2017).

Ceibal en Inglés takes learners from A0 to A1+ over the course of three years, and each level comprises a core syllabus of 30 weeks, with 67.5 hours planned classroom instruction per level. The weekly cycle begins with one 45-minute remote lesson (lesson A) and is followed by two 45-minute practice lessons (lessons B and C). There is also 15 hours of planned homework (30 mins per week), making for a total of 68.5 hours language input and practice.

To make explicit expected learning outcomes each syllabus included *can-do* competency statements “that attempt to specify what learners should be able to do at different levels” (Nunan and Lamb, 1996:30) and which were based on those included in the Council of Europe Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) *can do* statements (Council of Europe, 2018).

Lesson plans

As mentioned above, because two out of three of the lessons were to be mainly facilitated by non-English-speaking general primary classroom teachers (i.e. not specialised in language teaching), there was a need for lesson plans to be available in Spanish as well as English, to be both detailed and simple enough in their structure to be easily applied in the classroom by local classroom teachers (CTs). These lesson plans (see example extract below) were similar to scripts found in mainstream publisher *teacher’s books*, which have instructions designed to make it easy for teachers to use the accompanying student coursebooks in class.

Extract from *Ceibal en Inglés* lesson plan for week

4. Listening activity: Hello! My name is _____

(10 minutes) Warm up

- a. RT greets Ss and introduces himself/herself:

Hello. My name is _____. Nice to meet you.

- b. CT also greets Ss and RT and introduces himself/herself.

- c. RT shows the digital flashcards of Students or a Classroom (see folder

My Students) and says:

Look at my students!

and he/she introduces them:

This is Juan Ignacio. This is Emilia. This is Nicolás.
This is Pilar. This is Mila. This is Martín. This is Pedro

Despite the detail, however, as Banegas states (2013:182), the lesson plans were not to “be regarded prescriptive” and teachers “could customise them according to their needs” provided that any changes were discussed between the remote teacher (RT) and CT.

The lesson plans incorporated activities to present and practise language, and accompanying materials included vocabulary flashcards, bespoke audio and video recordings. In addition, the lesson plan writers incorporated existing materials from the British Council *LearnEnglish Kids* website (<http://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org>) and other resources freely available online.

Central to the design of the materials was the idea to replicate, as far as possible, the experience of a face-to-face lesson. The lesson plan writers also had

to take into account the fact that there were two teachers involved in the lesson – the RT and the CT, who was expected to take an active part in the remote lesson (lesson A) as well as being entirely responsible for facilitating the follow-up practice lessons (lessons B and C).

When developing the materials, the lesson plan writers also needed to cater for differences in students' needs and help the CTs develop foreign language teaching skills. For the pilot, the lesson plan writers *“had to design two full weeks and think carefully about how best to introduce the contents”* (interview with lesson plan writer, 2017).

Lesson plans were organised in such a way that, after lesson A was delivered by the English language teacher via videoconferencing, lessons B and C followed on as a natural consequence of lesson A (Kaplan, 2016 in Garcia and Báez Sus, eds, 2016).

Revising materials and lesson plans

Since the pilot, these lesson plans have been revised and updated annually to make sure they respond to the needs of the learners in the programme and to include changes and improvements recommended by RTs and other stakeholders, based on feedback collected during the academic year. These changes have usually been undertaken by quality managers, who are “constantly working on the lesson plans and materials and making sure that changes and revisions and updates are made”.

Assessment

The lesson plans include ongoing, continuous assessment of learning. Apart from formal instances of assessment, “self-assessment is built into the lesson plans and the materials, and the teachers ask the students to reflect at the end of each class ... on how they found the lesson in terms of easy to difficult, if there's something they didn't understand, etc.” (interview with managers, 2015).

Adapting lesson plans

Some adaptation of lesson plans is expected when these plans are put into practice because it is recognised that “pondering on the teaching process is vital in the search for developing materials that satisfy students' learning objectives and styles, preferences, and expectations” (Nuñez Pardo and Téllez Téllez, 2009:172).

This adaptation is done by the RTs, who develop or curate additional language-learning materials as experienced teachers do when they personalise their materials to make them more relevant to the students, and by “recognising the importance of teaching resources and strategies to maximise

students' language learning” (Nuñez Pardo and Téllez Téllez, 2009:172).

Furthermore, RTs go through a process of reflection and assessment of the materials provided for the whole cycle of lessons (A, B, and C) and, together with the classroom teacher, they agree on what and how to adapt these lesson plans to meet their students' needs and learning context. This helps students, according to Nuñez Pardo and Téllez Téllez (2009:173), to be “motivated and engaged in a comfortable, warm-hearted and challenging learning atmosphere”. RTs have reported that sometimes the lesson plans need adaptation to suit the students' background and contexts as well as their age-related interests.

The teacher's handbook

A teacher's handbook was also produced for the CTs explaining the principles behind the teaching methodology, and background information for the CTs who wanted to learn more about approaches to language teaching in general. This handbook provides a rationale for remote language teaching because, as reported by the lesson plan writers in the interviews, *“you cannot write plans without a rational [which means] establishing the main tenets with reference to what it is that we teach, why we teach it, how people learn, how students in these conditions learn, and what conditions should be created”*.

The first version for this handbook was produced (in August 2012) in Spanish so the classroom teacher, with limited or no English, could read about the underlying principles behind the lessons they were to facilitate. The teacher's handbook contains information regarding what is to be taught, the roles of each teacher during the course, how these two teachers are supposed to work together, and features of a communicative English language lesson.

Videoconferencing equipment

The videoconferencing equipment (VCE) connects schools in Uruguay with Remote Teaching Centres (RTCs), where RTs deliver lessons by establishing a point-to-point connection between the RTC and the school. The VCE allows the sharing of content by connecting the RTs laptop computer to the school VCE. Participants at both ends (RTC and school) can share audio and video materials as well as images and any type of document opened in the RT's laptop computer.

School-end laptop computers

Children and classroom teachers can also use laptop computers during lessons to access lesson materials, most of which are accessible from a learning management system (LMS). The students use the same laptops and LMS to complete homework.

Use of video

RTs consider the video materials to be “very productive for the learners” because it enables a wide variety of different voices to be used (focus group with remote teachers, 2016). The most popular videos (with students and teachers) are songs.

Other resources

The primary school children participating in *Ceibal en Inglés* also create their own materials, using free online resources such as *Vocaroo* (vocaroo.com), online voice recording software that allows students to record themselves, and then upload a link of the recording to the LMS that other students and the teachers can listen to, enabling both speaking and listening practice.

Advantages and disadvantages of *Ceibal en Inglés* materials

The combination of using specially created lesson plans and other materials means that teaching can be more easily made relevant to the lives of the learners. Design of materials also takes into account the special nature of both teaching via videoconferencing and the team-teaching aspect of the project, along with the need to design follow-on practice lessons that can be facilitated by the non-English speaking CTs. Kaiser (2017) called the “full and well-designed curriculum of 90 weeks with additional supplemental lessons” a strength of the project. These advantages must be offset by the time and cost required in order to produce these materials for class.

RLT materials in context: *Cauhtémoc Connected* materials design

In the case of *Cauhtémoc Connected*, a generally available published Secondary English coursebook was chosen for the pilot phase in order to save time. Subsequent phases used specially-written materials, as this was felt to be more appropriate to the teaching and learning context and would make better use of the affordances of videoconferencing with these 14-16-year-old learners. Students in *Cauhtémoc Connected* “came from three state schools located in underprivileged neighbourhoods across the area. Further details can be found in the chapter on the specifics of this project later in this book.

Syllabus

The syllabus featured “thematic areas and topics immediately relevant to the participants’ context and environment” and was comprised of “a 30-hour module divided into 15 weeks” (British Council, 2016). Learning handouts for students, appropriate ELT videos found on the web, and language games produced with free online resources, such as *Kahoot*

(*kahoot.com*). These lesson plans were detailed and staged following a broadly communicative language teaching approach. The lesson plans then were quality reviewed by the project management team before being used in class.

Student handouts

Remote teachers and facilitators put together a collection of handouts and worksheets to work with during the 30 lessons of the course. These handouts were printed and distributed among students.

Videoconferencing equipment

The videoconferencing equipment used in *Cauhtémoc Connected* resembled the one used for *Ceibal en Inglés*.

Use of laptop computers

Only RTs used laptop computers in this project. The students in Mexico did not have access to laptops. Because of this, there was no LMS in use in *Cauhtémoc Connected*.

Advantages and disadvantages of *Cauhtémoc Connected* materials

Adopting commercially available coursebooks for this project was necessary because there was no time to produce lesson plans or materials in time for the project start. These coursebooks, however, were found to be generally inappropriate for the teaching context and difficult to adapt to remote teaching. A switch was therefore made to specially designed lesson plans, supplemented by online resources, which were felt to be better suited to the context.

Conclusions

Remote language teaching is an innovative way of bridging cultural and geographical distances and enables the teaching and learning of languages to students who would otherwise not have the opportunity. It has been implemented in state-run school systems in both cases reported here. *Ceibal en Inglés* decided not to use coursebooks and *Cauhtémoc Connected* attempted to use one but found it lacking. Remote teaching in these contexts requires language-learning materials that can be easily accessed by all students and adapted to their needs. The use of a coursebook, in the case of *Cauhtémoc Connected*, was more difficult than first expected since the students participating in the project did not generally have access to the book due to their socio-economic situation, and it was difficult to adapt to teaching remotely. Although a generalisation, the RTs consulted about the use of commercially available coursebooks in remote teaching said they did not think they were appropriate.

Alternatives in remote teaching to the use of commercial coursebooks include the design and development of special lesson plans, and using an LMS for storage and easy access to materials. Communicative language teachers might be surprised that there is no use of a coursebook. As the design of both projects reported here was based on special learning contexts, lesson plans were found to be more appropriate.

Especially in the case of *Ceibal en Inglés*, purpose-made lesson plans and materials were necessary because of the unique nature of the team-teaching context and use of non-English-speaking teachers, with the RT being responsible for only one part of the teaching, and the CT in charge of follow-on language practice. Because of this, specially designed lesson plans were necessary.

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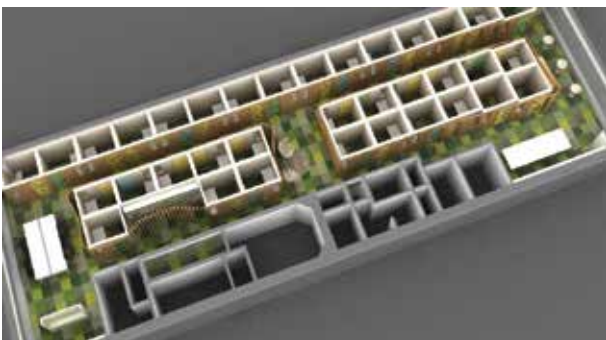
Management of a remote teaching centre

Robert Chatfield

- Remote teaching often involves multiple customers and other stakeholders who must be effectively managed. The perception of service quality is inextricably linked to the service delivery vehicle.
- Leading and motivating teachers in a remote context is more challenging than a face-to-face context due to the lack of physical interaction with students.
- Services that might be considered 'peripheral' in face-to-face teaching contexts become core services in the remote teaching context.
- The organisational structure of a remote teaching centre must reflect the need to support multiple stakeholders.

Introduction

This chapter describes what is involved in managing a large remote language teaching centre and compares this with managing a similar sized face-to-face language teaching centre. Before doing so, the chapter will explore the literature relating to service quality and relate this specifically to the management of the purpose-built British Council Remote Teaching Centre (RTC) in Buenos Aires, Argentina (pictured below).



The RTC in Buenos Aires is a purpose-built 300 square metre facility with 35 teaching points (TPs), a teachers' area, main office and break facilities. Although a number of different remote teaching projects are delivered from the RTC, significant reference will be made to *Ceibal en Inglés*, the project which involves remote teaching via videoconferencing into Uruguayan primary state schools (described in detail elsewhere in this publication). The TPs are equipped with dedicated

videoconferencing (VC) equipment. In addition, business English lessons are taught at the RTC to individual customers who connect through VC software without the need to utilise specialised equipment.

Management of teaching centres

According to White et al. (2008), management of all language teaching organisations occurs through various functions, often classified as:

- **Planning:** deciding what has to happen in the future (today, next week, next month, next year, over the next five years, etc.) and producing plans to achieve intended goals.
- **Organising:** making optimum use of the resources required to enable the successful carrying out of plans.
- **Leading/motivating:** employing skills in these areas for getting others to play an effective part in achieving plans and developing people's skills.

Controlling: checking progress, which may need modification based on feedback.

In terms of managing a remote teaching centre, these functional areas of course apply, the difference being the context in which the centre operates and the nature of the interaction with students and other stakeholders.

In terms of the above functions, there are key differences in the remote language teaching environment, which are identified below.

Organising

From a cost-based perspective, one of the great advantages of a remote teaching centre is the space required to deliver services. The RTC in Buenos Aires has 35 small 'classrooms' (called *teaching points*) in 300 square metres. A traditional teaching centre would be four or five times larger in size with the associated overheads. Another important point is that few traditional teaching centres have as many as 35 classrooms, and therefore the RTC can potentially reach a much larger number of students.

The remote nature of the services leads to added complexity from an organisational perspective, as not only must teachers be mapped to teaching points, but the planning must also take into account the location of the students and the method used to connect to those students using technology.

The RTC has developed a number of processes for this including a supervision rota, managed by teaching co-ordinators, who monitor the beginning and end of each class and provide support in case of technical issues.

From an operational perspective it is therefore more complex, as the students do not attend class in the traditional sense, and students must be mapped to teaching points and teaching points to teachers.

Another advantage is the ability to operate an RTC of this size with a relatively small operational team, as there are no students physically attending the centre. There are, however, roles which do not exist in a traditional face-to-face teaching centre. One example in the RTC is the student adviser – a customer services role which exists to support students through any uncertainties or technical difficulties they may have with a course. The student adviser also provides progress reports to students, information packs and reminders about lessons, generally sent via the mobile messaging app WhatsApp (www.whatsapp.com).

Leading and motivating

Leading and motivating staff in a remote language teaching context presents, on many levels, similar challenges to a face-to-face teaching context. Teachers require support, feedback, professional development, training and other input from the leadership team.

One of the key differences in terms of motivation for teachers in the remote language teaching context is the absence of feedback that occurs when teaching students face to face. This feedback takes the form of after-lesson student comments, body language and overheard dialogue between students. This is often lost when teaching remotely, as lessons end when connectivity between the teacher and students ceases.

Teachers in both contexts need support and feedback from their co-ordinators and managers, but with remote teachers it is also necessary to consider the effect that this lack of physical contact and interaction with students can have on them in terms of morale and the formation of emotional bonds with students.

Quality management

The management of quality in English language teaching (ELT) is usually linked to a particular

programme, course or structure, which is defined by either the end customer or the language institute itself. Teaching quality is assessed through a combination of:

1. Observation against known standards (observation may be undertaken by co-ordinators, academic managers or project quality managers)
2. Student progress through continual assessment or testing
3. Student feedback through questionnaires
4. Client feedback in the case of companies or large organisations.

One of the challenges of remote language teaching is that it is relatively new. As such, unlike in a face-to-face teaching environment, even experienced teachers require training. As such, induction is a key factor.

Teaching quality, and indeed service quality, are highly complex areas, and are discussed in greater detail in the following section.

Service quality and customer satisfaction in remote language teaching

One of the most striking elements of the teaching of English for speakers of other languages is the huge diversity of contexts in which it is provided. White et al. (2008) mention this, and state also that the role of management and administration has expanded greatly in the last 20 years, with a particular emphasis on quality.

Service quality and perceptions of service quality are paramount in remote teaching, which exists in a highly competitive commercial environment. The notion that ELT institutions were essentially service operations began to be discussed in the 1990s, and Walker (1999) states that in commercial projects ELT professionals are seen not just as teachers but also marketers and service providers.

In the context of *Ceibal en Inglés*, the RTC in Buenos Aires has to manage quality and service delivery with a number of different stakeholders in mind:

- Students, who are the ultimate customers
- The local classroom teacher (CT), who allows the remote teacher (RT) into their classroom for 45 minutes per week
- *Plan Ceibal*, generally represented by the project quality managers

How we define customer satisfaction, service quality and the customer experience is of great importance,

as these influence how we construct services for customers and service users. Understanding how customers judge service quality and how satisfaction is achieved are complex areas and, in a project with multiple customers, highly challenging to manage.

The literature makes a distinction between *service quality* and *customer satisfaction* (Bitner, 1990; Bolton and Drew, 1991; Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1988a). According to Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988b), *service quality* is an evaluation of several service encounters over time. They also thought it to be an overall assessment of a service category or an organisation, and noted that respondents to the study demonstrated satisfaction with specific service encounters but were not happy with the service quality overall. In contrast, *customer satisfaction* is a broader concept than service quality, which “focuses specifically on dimensions of service” (Zeithaml, Bitner and Gremler, 2006).

Service quality, therefore, is one component of the concept of customer satisfaction. Service quality is also influenced by customers’ perceptions of product quality, price, personal factors (such as the emotional state of the customer) and uncontrollable situational factors or *peripheral services*. Examples of *peripheral services* could be parking facilities at a school, front office administration and billing.

Managing service quality

The literature on service quality and the measurement of this is extensive and focuses on the service interface – the point of interaction between the service provider and customer. One of the most referenced models is the ‘Service Quality Model’ as defined by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985) in their work on both understanding and measuring service quality. This model postulates that service quality is a function of a number of ‘gaps’, which are inevitable due to the nature of the service. The fundamental premise of the model is that the quality of service or ‘perceived service’ is dependent on:

1. The customer’s expectations, influenced by past experience, personal needs and communication
2. The extent to which management has been successful in translating their own perceptions of service quality into effective service delivery.

The Service Quality Model has been used extensively in education (Sahney, Banwet and Karunes, 2004). Galloway and Wearn (1998) also mention the tension and complexities when there are multiple customers/ stakeholders in the public education context. As mentioned previously, this is the case with *Ceibal en Inglés*, where customers can be considered to be the Uruguayan state, *Plan Ceibal*, the heads of local schools, classroom teachers and, of course, the children themselves.

Dimensions of service quality

Parasuraman et al. (1988b) designed and described a service quality measurement system called SERVQUAL, which is a Likert scale survey tool that seeks to measure the gap between expectation and perception of service. This model was based on the premise that service quality could be broken down into a series of ‘dimensions’, which needed to be considered in the service quality measurement process:

1. Tangibles
 - a. Appearance of premises
 - b. Appearance of personnel
 - c. Quality of materials used in service delivery
2. Responsiveness
 - a. The capacity of the service to respond in a timely manner to problems
3. Reliability
 - a. The capacity of the service provider to do what has been promised
4. Assurance
 - a. The extent to which the service provider is accredited or qualified to do the work in question
5. Empathy
 - a. The capacity of the service provider to provide personalised services as perceived by the customer

Core versus peripheral services

It is unusual for services to operate in isolation. When going to a face-to-face lesson, the physical and verbal interaction between the teacher and the student might be considered the ‘core service’. However, this core service operates within a wider context of peripheral services that will impact the perception of service quality from the customer.

In a face-to-face teaching context, peripheral services could be:

- Reception and telephony services
- Parking services
- Facilities and amenities (does the classroom have air conditioning/heating, an interactive whiteboard (IWB), etc.)

While service providers will often focus on management of the ‘core service’, the impact of

peripheral services should not be overlooked, as the impact on perceptions of overall service quality can be significant.

Case study: managing the RTC Buenos Aires

The British Council RTC Buenos Aires is the largest dedicated remote teaching centre in the Americas. In any week over 1,000 hours of English lessons and training courses are provided for clients as diverse as the Uruguayan state, universities such as the University of Information Science in Cuba, secondary school teacher trainees in Iraq, secondary school students in Mexico, students in Iraq, Government employees in Argentina and private students in Argentina, Mexico, Colombia and Chile.

This section will seek to compare the challenges and practicalities of managing the RTC, with a face-to-face teaching centre, in the context of the three models previously described:

1. The Service Quality Model
2. Dimensions of service quality (SERVQUAL)
3. The impact of peripheral services on customer perceptions of service quality

Operational management

Operational management in a remote teaching centre has clear parallels with a face-to-face context, in that students and teachers must be matched with physical teaching facilities.

However, the planning, scheduling and operational management in a remote context is more complex due to:

1. Technology and connectivity – each lesson is dependent not only on the presence of the teacher but also on the technology required to connect the teacher to the group of students.
2. Location of the students, who may be together in one place or dispersed.

There are also differences in terms of the nature of customer services supporting the teaching operation and the nature of lessons. For example, in remotely taught programmes where students are dispersed and individual students may be joining the lesson from different cities, countries and time zones, customer service is not provided as in a face-to-face scenario via front office reception, but via a *student adviser*. The adviser acts as a guide for remote students in their interaction with the centre, and is available through a variety of media, such as email, telephone, *WhatsApp* and a videoconferencing platform such as *Zoom* (zoom.us) or *Skype* (www.skype.com) to provide guidance and support.

In the context of the RTC's work with *Ceibal en Inglés*, there is complexity around the fact that the remote teacher (RT) 'virtually' enters the classroom of a local classroom teacher (CT) in Uruguay for 45 minutes a week via videoconferencing; the RT needs to co-ordinate and work closely with the CT to deliver the lesson, and the success of the project depends on the development of an effective and positive working environment between these two individuals (discussed in more detail elsewhere in this book).

Connectivity as a 'core service'

With an increasing dependence on technology, all schools use connectivity to the internet and internet material as integral to the learning experience. In terms of the service interface, in the remote teaching context this is a core rather than peripheral service that is perhaps unusual in that its function is of paramount importance to the overall success of the teaching experience.

There are a number of options in terms of videoconferencing solutions, from high-end solutions utilising VC hardware and fibre-optic lines to the use of third party videoconferencing software such as *Skype* or *Zoom* and lower bandwidth connections. In general, the higher the quality (and cost) of the videoconferencing solution, the greater the impact of failure, as equipment failure can mean interruption of lessons for an extended period; for example, in a situation where videoconferencing hardware in a difficult-to-reach location needs physically replacing. However, high-end videoconferencing equipment is reliable and failures are unusual. Third party software, if required, is a useful back up.

Record keeping and business administration

Both scenarios (remote teaching and face to face) require significant electronic record keeping (to keep track of lessons taught, cancellations and attendance, for example).

Large-scale programmes such as *Ceibal en Inglés* may have specific and prescribed processes for recording lesson activity (see below) linked to billing and payment.

Records are arguably more complex in a remote teaching environment because of a higher number of factors at play (see next page) and the fact that cancellations are more likely in the remote language teaching context.

1. Technical issues at the customer end
2. Technical issues at the provider end
3. Students joining the classes may be dispersed across different cities, countries and time zones.

Month	March			April			May				TOTAL	
	From	13-Mar	20-Mar	27-Mar	31-Mar	17-Apr	24-Apr	1-May	8-May	15-May		22-May
	To	17-Mar	24-Mar	30-Mar	7-Apr	21-Apr	28-Apr	5-May	12-May	19-May		26-May
OK	226	457	641	966	716	835	653	842	801	647	6784	
Reprogramación	1	2	0	55	2	23	15	29	29	26	182	
Problemas_técnicos_escuela	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Factores_externos	4	4	1	0	16	21	0	23	32	39	140	
Cancelación_SIN_anticipación_desde_escuela_o_CT	11	40	32	55	45	58	116	58	96	82	593	
Otros	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Cancelación_CON_anticipación_desde_escuela_o_CT	1	5	3	11	169	32	23	17	21	18	300	
Cancelación_RT_o_Instituto	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3	
Grand Total	243	508	677	1087	948	969	807	969	979	815	8002	
Billable hours	242	503	674	1076	779	937	784	952	958	794	7699	
Rescheduled as % of canc	7%	5%	0%	100%	3%	29%	13%	36%	23%	21%	25%	
OK as % of total	93%	90%	95%	94%	76%	88%	82%	90%	84%	82%	87%	

While it is also common for there to be technical issues within a face-to-face environment, the teacher, when faced with difficulties, can immediately switch to a back-up plan. Within the RLT context, connectivity is all or nothing.

Management of technical support

The remote language teaching context also has an increased overhead in terms of staff resourcing. In the RTC, a member of staff needs to check each of the teaching points to ensure all lessons scheduled are taking place. While this might also occur in a face-to-face school, it is necessary to undertake both a physical and technical check in the RTC and to swiftly deal with any technical issues.

Variations

Operations management is also dependent on the specific type of remote teaching taking place:

a) Large-scale programme with students in one location

Managing operations in a large programme such as *Ceibal en Inglés* means interacting with a number of different stakeholders and meeting the different needs of these customers:

- The client's management team (e.g. *Plan Ceibal*) – will be keen for the programme to work and succeed with little or no interruption.
- Schools and school management – *Ceibal en Inglés* represents one 45-minute remote lesson out of many others in a full curriculum per week.
- Classroom teachers – may be highly engaged or less engaged depending on personal interest, perceived value of English to students and relationship with the remote teacher.
- Students – will be influenced by social context, their local and remote teacher and educational priorities.

In the context of the Service Quality Model, this can create significant complications. There is no single customer, and each part of the overall customer will have different expectations and perceptions based on their own needs.

b) Lessons with students dispersed across multiple locations

Managing remote teaching operations with students in various geographical locations is also more complex, compared to a face-to-face model. For example, management of attendance has so far proved more difficult in the remote teaching context. This might seem counter intuitive, but just as it is very easy to attend a remotely delivered class, it is equally easy to NOT attend. The resource applied to reminding students that they have a lesson the following day (via email, *WhatsApp* messages) is often not necessary in a face-to-face environment, or at least not to the same extent.

Management of service quality

It is interesting to consider the two contexts against the Parasuraman et al. (1985) model of service quality. From the table below, it can be seen that there is significant overlap between the two contexts, with the greatest disparity in terms of the more tangible elements of each service.

In both contexts, there are clearly similarities, such as 'lessons starting punctually' in the context of 'responsiveness':

DIMENSION	FACE TO FACE	REMOTE TEACHING
TANGIBLES	Premises Classroom set up Comfort of chairs Technology such as interactive whiteboards, etc. Appearance of teacher Access to school Reception and waiting area Materials	Teaching point (from where the remote teacher teaches) Appearance of the virtual classroom VC equipment or software Internet connection Appearance of teacher Materials Sense of eye contact with teacher
RESPONSIVENESS	Waiting time in reception Response time to emails Response time to phone calls Timescales to resolve problems	Response time to emails Response time to phone calls Timescales to resolve problems
RELIABILITY	Lessons starting punctually	Lessons starting punctually Speed of recovery with connectivity issues Per cent of cancelled lessons
EMPATHY	Individual attention from teacher Perception of support and progress	Individual attention from teachers Perception of support and progress
ASSURANCE	Qualifications of teacher Reputation of school – affiliation or accreditation Quality management, observation and internal/external assessment processes	Qualifications of teacher Reputation of school – affiliation or accreditation Quality management, observation and internal/external assessment processes

Impact of peripheral services on core service

Previously, we reviewed literature that considered the extent to which peripheral services might impact on perceptions of service quality from the perspective of the customer. The table below considers the various peripheral services around remote teaching and the face-to-face context.

The difference in terms of these peripheral services is significant. For example, in the context of a dispersed remote lesson, a late start to a lesson due to technical issues (e.g. a break in connectivity) can have a significant impact on the customer perceptions of service quality. While failure to

connect may be due to entirely extraneous factors, this may be perceived as poor service. In a face-to-face context, tolerance for lateness may be higher due to students being able to socialise while waiting for the teacher to arrive, etc.

As a result, connectivity is of prime concern to the remote teaching service provider. In the context of a dispersed remote lesson, with students in different locations, there will be multiple internet connections in use and the success or otherwise of the class may be affected by, for example, disruptions caused by a student with weak connectivity dropping in or out of the lesson (sometimes repeatedly), voice distortions, loss of camera, and so on.

FACE TO FACE	REMOTE TEACHING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building and premises • Access and parking • Reception and meet and greet/customer services • Classroom setting (heat and lighting and air conditioning) • Materials – coursebooks • Classroom technology (IWB, etc.) • Classroom appearance, seating and comfort • Teacher appearance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internet bandwidth of teaching centre • Camera quality and camera position, which are both critical for effective in-class communication • Microphone – sound quality is of vital importance for clear communication • Acoustics – Teaching Points must be soundproofed, as otherwise microphones will pick up noise from other sources, interfering with lessons. • Connectivity quality of receiving institution (if students in one location) or individual students (if dispersed) • Backdrop and teacher appearance • Lighting – Teaching Points must have adequate lighting to ensure a clear image for students • Teaching materials

Academic and classroom management

This section compares and contrasts academic management in the remote and face-to-face language teaching contexts. Experienced teachers will be aware that one of the key factors in a successful academic year with a group is the extent to which students are trained to interact in the classroom, work in groups and understand the nature and point of activities – e.g. information gap work in pairs.

In the remote teaching context, classroom management is more difficult due to the virtual environment. In addition to training students in terms of how to work with technology, the RT may also need to be trained in how to promote interaction in a virtual environment. In some contexts (e.g. *Ceibal en Inglés*), not only is there technology and lack of direct physical presence to consider, but also the need for team teaching.

Furthermore, remote teaching of dispersed individuals via software such as *Zoom* brings interesting new classroom management realities, such as screaming babies on participants' laps, noisy pets, smokers and even people riding buses or walking around their home town while participating. Flexible teachers and remote lesson etiquette (e.g. muting the microphone when not speaking) become very important.

Management of a team-teaching environment

In the *Ceibal en Inglés* context, the importance of engaging the classroom teacher and the impact of the remote teacher and classroom teacher relationship on the perception of service quality is one of the most significant factors. Breakdown of this relationship can lead to the disruption of teaching and learning, complaints made to school director and *Plan Ceibal*, and even CTs abandoning the programme. As such, there is strong focus on *coordination* between the remote teacher and the classroom teacher, and on the development of that relationship. This is discussed in further detail later in this chapter.

Recruitment and selection

When recruiting remote teachers it is important to conduct all interviews via videoconferencing (for example, via *Skype* or *Zoom*), even if those being interviewed live nearby and can come to the RTC in person, in order to determine how far candidates have *screen presence* (i.e. the ability to project themselves on a screen and to effectively engage the people on the other end). While it could be argued that remote interviews make it more difficult to completely assess the candidate, it is business critical to ascertain from the outset that the applicant can teach effectively via a screen.

Teacher training

Remote training (e.g. via Zoom) is arguably easier to organise, as teachers can join remotely from wherever they happen to be and this flexibility enables high attendance. It is important to keep all trainees actively engaged so it doesn't in effect become a lecture via webinar. Similarly, ongoing teacher mentoring (coaching and support for less experienced teachers by more experienced teachers) can effectively take place remotely.

Appraisal and performance management

Appraisal may be more 'shared' and objective in a virtual environment due to the ability to record whole lessons and then discuss together – this is not routinely done in face-to-face lessons. Remote performance monitoring offers more flexibility for academic managers, as they can observe a class virtually from any location or record the lesson for subsequent observation (provided written permission is obtained in advance from the students).

Continued professional development

Remotely delivered interactive training offers flexibility and reach, and its effectiveness can be measured in the same way as face-to-face training, through surveys and online polls.

Management of teacher morale and the teaching community within and outside the centre

One of the challenges for the management of remote language teaching is ensuring a sense of community among remote teachers. Within a remote teaching centre, teachers may spend hours in front of their computers within individual teaching points that may be restricted in size, so it is helpful to have a communal space where they can meet, socialise, eat, stretch and even dance; for example, remote teachers in the Buenos Aires RTC have organised communal breakfasts, lunches and dancing and stretching sessions between classes.

Regular 'virtual get-togethers' can be effective for getting to know one another, familiarising teachers with the organisational culture, discussing aspects of

remote teaching and building a sense of community and belonging:

A remote group discussion (the participants are in different locations)

When constructing an evidence base to demonstrate the effectiveness of remote teaching, given that remote language teaching is relatively new, one of the challenges is demonstrating its efficacy. While progress testing is commonplace in both face-to-face and remote teaching environments, it is arguably less common in the face-to-face context to undertake studies that evaluate the delivery method itself. An example of this can be seen when comparing the results of *Ceibal en Inglés* with the face-to-face programme in Uruguay (*Segundas Lenguas*). This is discussed in more detail in the chapter on evaluation in this volume.

Knowledge management

Knowledge management and knowledge sharing is a significant challenge in both face-to-face and remote teaching contexts, but using a learning management system (LMS) and standard lesson plans can help (although the potential risk of disempowering the teacher and stifling their creativity needs to be kept in mind).

Conclusions

While there are many commonalities between the management of the RTC and a face-to-face teaching centre, there are significant differences in terms of operational management, leading, managing and motivating staff, and also quality control.

There may be a reduction in overheads resulting from working from a smaller footprint, but there are additional costs incurred from managing the complexity of services to multiple locations, from the need to provide additional training and induction to all staff, and the need to oversee and monitor all teaching points, to ensuring technical issues are resolved rapidly.

The management of remote teaching will involve multiple stakeholders and, as in face-to-face teaching, will remain highly dependent on the service agent – the teacher. In the context of a remote teaching centre, the complexity is increased by the impact and stakeholder perception of core services that would be peripheral in the face-to-face context, most notably the technology used as the service vehicle.

The nature of the service being provided also has a significant impact on delivery. In the cited examples, management of a dispersed group of students who are direct customers presents a distinct set of challenges, as does the management of indirect customers.



Further research is required into the impact of the remote nature of service delivery on the perceptions of service quality and the variation in stakeholder perceptions according to the relationship with the service provider. The SERVQUAL survey method could be utilised to quantify the gaps between expectation and experience.

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Remote
language teaching:
Ceibal en Inglés

4

***Ceibal en Inglés:* innovation, teamwork and technology**

Gabriela Kaplan and Claudia Brovetto

- *Ceibal en Inglés* is an innovative combination of remotely taught lessons via videoconferencing, blended learning and collaborative team teaching
- Some 3,327 English classes a week are taught remotely, covering 96 per cent of Uruguayan children in 4th to 6th grade urban schools
- *Ceibal en Inglés* has fostered the creation of a new type of innovative learning environment
- Interculturality has been introduced to secondary and vocational education with the *Conversation Classes* programme

This chapter presents an overview of *Ceibal en Inglés*, its design and components, as well as its evolution. *Ceibal en Inglés* is the collective name for a number of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) projects in Uruguayan state education that combine pedagogy and technology in different ways depending on the needs, characteristics and context of the groups of students and teachers participating in each specific project. In this chapter we will focus on *Ceibal en Inglés* for primary, secondary and vocational education.

Background

Ceibal en Inglés in primary schools started in 2012 with the goal of expanding English language teaching to all primary state school children in Uruguayan urban schools. It was designed for teaching English to children and their teachers in 4th, 5th and 6th grades (ages nine to 12). *Ceibal en Inglés* Primary is a blend of face-to-face and remote team teaching and provides a technological solution to making more effective use of teachers who are available to teach but who are not physically located in the Uruguayan schools across the country. *Ceibal en Inglés* Primary combines three modalities of language teaching:

- 1. Remote teaching.** The teacher of English is not physically present in the classroom, but teaches remotely once a week through videoconferencing.
- 2. Collaborative team teaching.** Two teachers are jointly responsible for the course content,

lesson activities and continuous assessment. The remote teacher (RT) and the local classroom teacher (CT) teach through mutual co-operation.

- 3. Blended learning.** A model of education that combines distance and face-to-face teaching. This programme is an example of this, as the teacher of English teaches remotely, while the classroom teacher facilitates follow-up language practice face to face (Brovetto, 2017, 2015; Kaplan, 2016).

The design of the *Ceibal en Inglés* Primary curriculum includes three 45-minute weekly English lessons, referred to as lessons A, B and C. Lesson A is taught by the RT via videoconferencing. During this lesson, the CT works in tandem with the RT to facilitate the learning. Lessons B and C do not include the participation of the RT. They are led by the CT who, although having limited proficiency in English, is able to practise, revise and recycle what was taught in lesson A with the help of scripted lesson plans in Spanish. The lesson plans guide the teachers and provide access to games, songs, videos and other digital materials hosted online and on *Crea*, Plan Ceibal's learning management system (LMS). The digital materials available on *Crea* are accessed through the students' laptops, popularly known as *XOs* or *ceibalitas*. The LMS also allows for student–teacher, student–student and teacher–teacher asynchronous communication. As part of the national policies for language teaching, *Ceibal en Inglés* Primary aims for students to reach level A2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2001) after three years and approximately 200 hours of English lessons.

Teaching in urban schools

Ceibal en Inglés Primary was piloted in 2012 with 57 groups in 20 urban schools and expanded rapidly and progressively over the following four years. *Ceibal en Inglés* Primary works in co-ordination with another EFL programme (Segundas Lenguas) in primary schools that has been in existence since the 1990s. It is run by Departamento de Segundas Lenguas y Lenguas Extranjeras CEIP, using face-to-face teachers of English who come to schools to

teach each class three times per week. The tables below show the number of schools, groups and students in *Segundas Lenguas* and *Ceibal en Inglés* over the past four years.

2014			
Programme	Schools	Groups	Students
<i>Ceibal en Inglés</i>	383	2,128	50,345
<i>Segundas Lenguas</i>	269	1,181	28,300
Total	652	3,309	78,645

Table 1: English language teaching in primary schools 2014

2015			
Programme	Schools	Groups	Students
<i>Ceibal en Inglés</i>	563	3,297	77,068
<i>Segundas Lenguas</i>	294	1,263	29,037
Total	857	4,560	106,105

Table 2: English language teaching in primary schools 2015

2016			
Programme	Schools	Groups	Students
<i>Ceibal en Inglés</i>	572	3,519	80,217
<i>Segundas Lenguas</i>	304	1,302	29,300
Total	876	4,821	109,517

Table 3: English language teaching in primary schools 2016

2017			
Programme	Schools	Groups	Students
<i>Ceibal en Inglés</i>	536	3,327	74,907
<i>Segundas Lenguas</i>	317	1,396	31,507
Total	853	4,723	106,414

Table 4: English language teaching in primary schools 2017

In 2017 *Ceibal en Inglés* Primary taught 3,327 classes in 536 schools, and *Segundas Lenguas* taught 1,396 classes in 317 schools. Since 2016, both programmes have reached together a total of 95 per cent of Uruguayan children in 4th to 6th grades in urban schools.

Teaching in rural schools

Ceibal en Inglés uses videoconferencing technology and fibre-optic connectivity, which is generally unavailable in rural schools. For this reason, other solutions have been sought. Those rural schools near an urban school join *Ceibal en Inglés* through the *Escuela Amiga* programme. In this case, rural school students go to the closest urban school where an RT is allocated for that particular group.

As this is not possible in all cases, other solutions are being explored. In cases where there is sufficient connectivity, *Ceibal en Inglés* uses *Cisco Jabber* software to connect from a school computer to an RT in a teaching point that has standard videoconferencing and Cisco videoconferencing equipment.

In some other cases, CTs are used when their English is sufficient. The rural schools' CTs who have an A2 or above level of English work with *Ceibal en Inglés* lesson plans and materials, together with an *E-Coach*, who supports CTs with lesson implementation, correction of work and understanding of the required processes for the acquisition of a foreign language.

Rural schools 2017	
Mode	quantity
<i>Ceibal en Inglés</i>	21
E-Coach	10
<i>Escuelas Amigas</i>	11

Table 5: ELT in rural primary schools 2017

Classroom teacher English

Ceibal en Inglés Primary CTs are encouraged to learn English and there are optional online self-access courses for those teachers who want to study English. However, all CTs also learn English by actively participating in the project, working with a remote teacher of English and by facilitating the practice and consolidation of lessons B and C.

Ceibal en Inglés in secondary and vocational education

In secondary and vocational schools, the context requires a different design. English has been a subject in Uruguayan secondary and vocational state education since the 1940s, taught by Classroom Teachers of English (CTEs). However, it was felt there was a need to create more opportunities for students to speak and participate in intercultural communication. Considering this, *Ceibal en Inglés* launched a voluntary programme titled Conversation Classes. When a CTE signs up for this, one of the three curricular hours of English includes the participation of an RT, who is usually a native speaker of English, and who co-conducts – together with the CTE – a lesson that focuses on promoting oral skills and multicultural awareness. A special set of lesson plans and materials were developed for these Conversation Classes.

Year	Schools	Groups	Students
2015	76	344	8,600
2016	168	700	18,500
2017	151	680	17,000

Table 6: Conversation Classes programme 2017

Conversation Classes challenges

The *Ceibal en Inglés Conversation Classes* programme poses challenges for both administrators and teachers. One important challenge relates to the diversity of backgrounds of the students. Some students have previously studied English in primary school or in a private language academy, and therefore their knowledge of English varies. Professional development (*Tutorials for Differentiated Learning*) has been developed to help deal with this. In the tutorials, the RT acts as online tutor.

Additionally, there is a conflict between the *Conversation Classes* programme, which aims at promoting oral skills, and the strong tradition of grammar teaching which, although not always explicit, is dominant in these schools. A strategy has been adopted to promote reflection and collaboration between RTs and CTEs, and among CTEs, so that the teachers can work through the best solutions in a situated and contextualised manner.

Monitoring and evaluation of *Ceibal en Inglés*

Since its beginning in 2012, *Ceibal en Inglés* Primary has been closely monitored and regularly evaluated. The first stage of evaluation primarily aimed at evaluating the impact of the programme, to find out whether the curricular design was effective and resulted in the students learning English. This was especially relevant given there was no previous experience in teaching English or other subjects through videoconferencing at primary schools in Uruguay, and very little evidence of programmes in other countries. With this goal, in 2013 an impact evaluation was proposed and implemented (see the chapter by Marconi and Brovetto in this publication). This study compared the results in a test between two groups of students with different amounts of exposure to *Ceibal en Inglés* Primary English lessons. The study showed statistically significant differences in the results and a positive correlation between exposure to the programme and learning outcomes.

After that experience, in 2014 *Ceibal en Inglés* introduced the assessment of all students through an online computer adaptive test. The development and implementation of a large-scale adaptive test was in itself an advanced and powerful tool. The adaptive test allows for the possibility of testing a large population of students with diverse backgrounds and proficiency levels, whose knowledge of English would be very hard to assess with non-adaptive fixed tests. The adaptive test is an inter-institutional effort developed by ANEP, *Plan Ceibal* and the British Council, and administered every year locally by school teachers and teachers of English. The test includes three components (two adaptive tests:

Vocabulary/Reading/Grammar and Listening Comprehension; and one non-adaptive: Writing). The team is also working on the development of a component for assessing Speaking. Since its first implementation in 2014, many students (around 60,000) have taken the test every year and show systematic and consistent progress (see Marconi and Brovetto in this publication for a presentation and analysis of the results).

Teacher development

From the beginning of *Ceibal en Inglés*, the British Council led on the professional development of RTs, while *Plan Ceibal* concentrated on supporting the CTs with best practices, particularly on how best to enable CTs to become confident facilitators of language learning in their classrooms.

It was necessary to provide scalable teacher support, and during the first years the *Ceibal en Inglés* team travelled the country to look, listen and learn. Subsequently, after 500 classes were being taught, the role of the *Ceibal en Inglés* mentor was created. *Ceibal en Inglés* mentors are English teachers whose role is to provide guidance and support to CTs, particularly when it comes to assisting them with lessons B and C. Mentors help CTs understand what it means to facilitate learning, with the need to work collaboratively and with the technology required for successful learning to occur. See specific chapters on the Classroom Teacher and on the Mentor in this publication, and *Appendix II: Empowering the classroom teacher in Ceibal en Inglés* for further details of the support the mentor provides.

Team teaching and collaboration

For *Ceibal en Inglés* to succeed, working collaboratively is paramount. Both RT and CT need to have read and discussed the lesson plan together, participating actively and providing feedback to each other at the end of the lesson, with the aim of analysing and improving classroom practices to facilitate student learning. As simple as this may seem, Uruguay has a tradition of teachers working in isolation, and for this collaboration to provide benefit to our students, it is essential that both professionals see each other as peers and as equals, each with their own responsibilities and functions, but both focused on the development of the children.

Collaboration, peer support and partnership are at the heart of *Ceibal en Inglés*. The CT needs to see their own students as learning partners, as they practise and learn English together, and the CT is invited to work in a different way, to show children how to concentrate, how to organise their time and prioritise activities, where to find reliable sources of information, how to deal with frustration, when to pay greater attention and when to use the knowledge acquired.

When the collaboration in *Ceibal en Inglés* works as planned, students find their autonomy boosted and English can become a tool that opens new doors, doors they have themselves chosen to open. The first door that brings the outside to the inside of the classroom is the presence of the RT.

The innovation of videoconferencing

At first sight, the use of videoconferencing might appear to simply address problems such as lack of teachers of English in Uruguay. However, it also fosters the creation of a new type of learning environment, opening the classroom walls to a world outside of school. When the RT appears on the screen ready to teach, to share their knowledge and enthusiasm for learning a foreign language, students begin to better realise that education in general, and English specifically, exists to open doors to the world.

The classroom teacher is the key to successful learning

Although the use of videoconferencing allows the RT into the classroom to teach, the success of their intervention is determined by the attitude of the CT. Students respond first and foremost to the local CT, who is their natural beacon of learning and emotional support. For an RT to create a powerful bond with the children it is necessary for them to establish a good working relationship with their CT. This can be clearly perceived when one observes a remotely taught lesson. For instance, when the RT asks a question, students usually look at their local teacher as they raise their hands. They expect their CT to give them the floor to speak, or they often ask the CT a question which the CT then asks the RT to answer. It is the CT who is mainly in charge of classroom management, who influences the mood of the lesson and, subsequently, the attitude towards learning English.

Co-ordination between RT and CT

The challenge, then, for RTs, is to gain the CT's trust, and the opportunity to do so is through the weekly co-ordination session. The first step is for each teacher to understand the other's context and background. RT and CT may come from different socio-cultural backgrounds, have different concepts of learning and teaching, have a different understanding of what collaborative teaching means, etc., but they are united in wanting the best for the children. Interviews and surveys with both RTs and CTs have shown that during the first part of the year, RTs and CTs get to know each other, both undergo their own process of reflection that leads to establishing a pattern of behaviour and routines for the year. Even when both professionals are Uruguayan, they have expressed the need to negotiate pedagogical meaning. The use of repetition and imitation, for example, believed by many to be

fundamental in second language acquisition, despite criticism (Dam Jensen, 2003; Trofimovich and Gatbonton, 2006; Yan, X et al., 2016; Ghazi-Saidi and Ansaldo, 2017), is often perceived by CTs as a behaviourist method of learning, which they find inappropriate for the context of their classroom.

Ceibal en Inglés conversation classes – secondary and vocational

In contrast to primary, in secondary and vocational schools there is already a classroom teacher of English (CTE). The difference between these two professionals in terms of background lies in the fact that the RT is a native speaker of English, and thus an element of interculturality is introduced into the classroom. The CTEs benefit from a weekly visit of a remote teacher of English to help their students practise oral skills. The focus of *Ceibal en Inglés Conversation Classes* in secondary and vocational schools is also on reaching out to students with different levels of English.

Once RTs and CTEs work collaboratively, students usually become highly engaged in developing their oral skills. Surveys with teachers show that the RT visit is perceived by students as a “genuine communicative moment” especially, as is often the case, when the RT does not speak much or any Spanish. It has been reported too that students also generally respond with enthusiasm to the RTs talking about their culture, town, festivals, food, music, etc. The CTE, who knows lesson plans, is invited to pre-teach and to make sure that students do all the practice to take advantage of the RT's lesson. CTs participating in the *Conversation Classes* programme have remarked on the positive influence that the focus on interculturality has had on students.

Tutorials for Differentiated Learning

Alongside the *Conversation Classes*, as students usually have different levels of English in secondary and vocational education, support is given using specially designed *Tutorials for Differentiated Learning* (TDLs), which are introduced by the CT and moderated asynchronously on the learning management system (LMS) by the same RT who teaches the *Conversation Classes*.

TDLs were designed to address the fact that children reach secondary education with very diverse backgrounds in English. These are asynchronous tutorials that invite students to view, read and listen in English at a level that depends on expertise in the second language. These tutorials have been designed to go beyond the curriculum and to engage students in the world above and beyond the classroom.

Ceibal en Inglés is still in the pilot phase of the *Conversation Classes* programme, but initial

indications are that students are positive, and it is felt that these tutorials may stretch the potential of the LMS and transform it into a generator of culture, as the LMS has been used as a springboard for students to discover music, films, towns, maps, national parks, stars and sports, among others. The tutorials are not expected to connect classrooms, but to connect students to a world in which English is the means of culture, and the students complete tasks according to their own level of proficiency in the second language.

In this manner, through two forms of intervention – videoconferencing and the LMS – *Ceibal en Inglés* has managed in secondary and vocational schools to continue stimulating and encouraging collaborative work; promote new ways of communicating with others inside and outside the classroom and the school; foster autonomous learning and discovery of the world; provoke a sense that learning may happen at any moment; and that both technology and English have a great deal to offer students in their continuous development.

Community building

An important aim of *Ceibal en Inglés* is to nurture an educational community; one which includes a wider group of people usually found in schools, including the classroom teachers, school directors, mentors, remote teachers and institute co-ordinators, e-tutors who teach English to the classroom teachers, lesson plan writers, quality managers and others.

McMillan (1986) has stated that “when people who share values come together, they find they have similar needs, priorities and goals, thus fostering briefly that in joining together they might be able to satisfy those needs and obtain the reinforcement they seek.” With this in mind, the *Ceibal en Inglés* educational community was solidified in 2016 with an event titled *First Encounter with the Remote in the Creation of an Educational Community*, with talks, panels, workshops and poster presentations by various members from across the entire spectrum of the community.

This *First Encounter* aimed to foster a feeling of belonging, a sense of personal relatedness and identification with the needs of our students. It showed that teachers can share with fellow teachers and other professionals to contribute to the development of our students and schools, and that we can all influence each other, especially when given the chance to present our concerns and empower each other.

Challenges for the future

In education, present and future tend to mingle as administrators are usually concerned with a present that will have a beneficial impact in the future. Now,

Ceibal en Inglés has a focus on improving quality: quality of teaching, of materials, of technology. Simultaneously, much effort is being used on strategies to help those children who are not performing as well as the others.

Ceibal en Inglés is without a doubt a ‘brave new world’ (Shakespeare, 2005 Act V.i.), a world to look at with the same sense of wonder and curiosity that Miranda’s eyes betrayed, as she saw the variety, intensity and beauty of the new world ahead. Like Miranda, we look in awe holding hands with the rest of the *Ceibal en Inglés* community, feeling that we are all members of a group that shares the same hopes and needs, and in the knowledge that most of our educational desires will be met through commitment to be together.

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Appendix I

Teachers Know

Classification by Malderez and Wedell, 2007:19

About:

- Their subject, their aims and the role of the wider curriculum
- How the subject is learnt, the existence of strategies to support learning
- Policies, accepted norms and procedures within the education system
- The students, their backgrounds, their needs
- Strategies for managing their own ongoing professional learning, the existence of professional organisations and support networks, and journals in their subject area

How:

- Use strategies to support pupils and their own learning
- Notice important features in classroom and organisations
- Promote conditions which support the learning process
- Assess learning
- Relate to students, other professionals, parents and colleagues
- Fulfill other professional obligations
- Assess and use new ideas and/or theories to think, plan and/or assess

To:

- Intuitively and instantaneously use what they know (whether it is 'knowing about' or 'knowing how' type of knowledge) at just the right moment, and in just the right way to support the learning of their particular learners, in their classrooms

Appendix II

Empowering the Classroom Teacher in *Ceibal en Inglés*

Gabriela Kaplan, 2014

The disempowered CT:

- relies only on translation
- is over-concerned with accuracy
- uses no or very little L2 in the classroom
- does not use lesson plans
- encourages students to use just words
- has behavioural issues in their classroom
- hardly uses student laptops
- finds co-ordination with the RT very hard
- does not foster an 'English environment'
- allows the formation of 'two groups' in their class: those who study English outside the school and those who do not
- prefers to teach metalanguage rather than language through use
- uses their role as mediator between students and the RT as an obstacle that hinders the possibility of building rapport between the RT and students, so the students become dependent on the CT to work with RT
- does all lessons one after the other, so timetabling becomes a problem
- finds targets to blame for their own shortcomings (e.g. "The RT does not send any emails," when the RT has sent several emails, some complaining that the CT does not respond)
- is paralysed by fear, which means they cannot act even when students are motivated to learn English

The empowered CT:

- uses mime and gestures instead of translation or in addition to it
- uses pictures/posters in the classroom to create an 'English environment'
- is enthusiastic to learn new English words, to embrace new language, a new world
- learns easy classroom vocabulary and uses it in lessons B and C
- uses the internet to find dictionaries and other useful tools
- repeats what the RT says in English
- uses the provided lesson plans
- implements pair work, group work, role play
- is not afraid of making mistakes and takes risks in L2
- builds a community around the school, with parents giving support
- uses the laptops even when they are not easily available (borrows from other classes, from the school, etc.)
- enjoys the intercultural aspect of learning English
- responds to the RT's commitment when there is an opportunity to do so
- encourages everyone in the classroom to use their own knowledge of technology, English, cultural aspects, etc.
- detects errors and communicates them to RTs
- does not mind if students know more than themselves
- shares her newly acquired knowledge with other children at the school
- finds strategies to overcome difficult/restless groups
- uses English above and beyond lessons B and C: on field trips, in other subjects, etc.
- finds pleasure in being a learner with their students
- makes sure their role as mediator between RT and students promotes rapport and makes communication flow
- writes down their own doubts to share with RTs
- encourages the creation of a class glossary
- finds other resources when the internet is not reliable; downloads materials to use
- understands the time needed between one lesson and another
- understands language is a means of communication; does not obsess over grammar, spelling and structures
- embraces any feelings of anxiety or fear relating to the difficulties of L2 but manages to overcome this with bravery and commitment to their students learning

5

Student voice in remote language learning

Silvia Rovegno

- 71 per cent of children in 4th–6th grades (9–12-year-olds) in state primary education in Uruguay learn English remotely
- 93 per cent of students interviewed stated they liked learning English remotely
- 86 per cent of these students said they felt they are learning English effectively this way
- 93 per cent of the students would like to learn other subjects remotely

Introduction

A study about the nature and effectiveness of a new way of teaching and learning would not be complete without hearing from the students. They are the only ones who truly experience remote language *learning*; all the other voices – remote teachers (RTs), classroom teachers (CTs), mentors, managers – can describe the *teaching* and report on the results obtained by the students. These other aspects are covered in the respective chapters of this publication. In order to capture their voice and bring us closer to understanding how effective language learning is in a remote environment, a number of focus groups with students were carried out. They were held with students in their final year (sixth grade), which means they had three years' worth of experience of remote language learning and a certain level of cognitive maturity that allowed them to talk about these experiences in a more critical way.

Student voice research

Research on the experience of learning and the impact it has on the individual has a surprisingly short history in English Language teaching. In their seminal work on the experiences of English language learners around the world, Benson and Nunan (2005:5) state that “The history of our field ... shows that for much of the twentieth century researchers were far more interested in problems of teaching than they were in problems of learning.” The movement towards a more learner-centred pedagogy advocates that “learners’ varied responses to teaching are as important a factor in language learning, if not more so, than the teaching itself”

(ibid:6). In their work, a series of studies are reported, which include aspects such as motivation, affect and emotion in language learning, learner identity construction, and coping with distance learning. All the studies presented focused on young adult and adult learners from around the world and used biographical research as the common research methodology.

Reoccurring themes in student research have covered issues such as cognitive and affective learning outcomes, perceptions of classroom environment, students’ attitudes and self-efficacy beliefs (Bell and Aldridge, 2014:24). However, these authors go on to say that these more affective outcomes “are often overlooked in preference to cognitive outcomes, most commonly demonstrated through student achievement data” (ibid).

Ellis (2012:161), when concluding his review of longitudinal research on language students’ learning, states that: “The early studies were informed by research in second language acquisition (SLA), were descriptive in nature, and were focused more or less exclusively on grammatical aspects of the L2. Later studies switched attention to pragmatic aspects of learner-language. More recently, studies have been informed by socio-interactional theories of learning, focusing on how classrooms as social contexts shape the way learners behave and on how learners themselves can help to construct the local contexts in which they are learning.”

Still, the studies cited focus mainly on specific aspects of the learning experience and not on the wholeness of what learning a language in a particular way entails. More recently, the attention of teachers and educational authorities has shifted towards what students have to say in terms of their educational experiences as informed participants. DeFur and Korinek (2010:15) conducted focus groups with middle school students from rural and suburban schools in the USA on issues that affect their learning. These authors conclude that:

“The credibility of students as expert witnesses of effective instruction seems undeniable. We believe that the adolescents with whom we spoke ... demonstrate experiential knowledge that upgrades students to a position of authority in identifying

effective instructional practices. Their perceptions were strikingly similar to those expressed by the recognised experts ... who offered specific, research-based actions that school leaders could take to improve student outcomes” (ibid:18).

Further studies on students’ voices were identified as occurring mainly in the last ten years of educational research and cover issues such as students as reformers (Yonezawa and Jones, 2009), student identity and disability (Peters, 2010), students as co-researchers in academic inquiry (Marquis et al., 2017) and the experiences of learning at an East Africa University (Badiru and Nyawira, 2017). The studies are not abundant but browsing through any journal database, such as Jstor, we can start identifying the occurrence of more student-centred educational research, where the students’ central voice is the object of inquiry.

The students of Ceibal en Inglés

All children enrolled in state primary schools in Uruguay are required by law to learn English as a foreign language. There are roughly 122,000 students enrolled in public primary education in Uruguay. Current estimates indicate that 71 per cent of the students in grades 4, 5 and 6 learn English remotely via *Ceibal en Inglés* and 19 per cent receive face-to-face language instruction. (Plan Ceibal, 2017:59). This means that for over 3,500 classes in 650 schools, language instruction is carried out remotely, and around 700 remote lessons are delivered daily into Uruguay from the remote teaching centres located in several different countries around the world (ibid:60–61).

In order to make sense and truly understand the experiences of these learners, it is important to take some time to understand the context in which they are educated. State schools in Uruguay are classified in two ways: by type of school and by socio-economic quintile.

School quintiles (ANEP, 2016:4–5) are defined by the statistical analysis of a series of indicators:

- *Socio-educational level*: taking into consideration the mothers’ highest and lowest levels of education achieved
- *Socio-economic level*: taking into account the percentage of homes in the school that have access to drinking water, home sewage treatment systems, typical home appliances, as well as the level of overcrowding in the home and the quality of the dwellings
- *Social integration level*: percentage of homes with children who do not attend formal education and of homes in derelict areas

The schools are then divided in five quintiles, quintile 1 encompasses 20 per cent of schools in the most vulnerable contexts and quintile 5 covers 20 per cent in the least vulnerable contexts.

In addition to the socio-economic classification, schools are classified according to the following criteria:

Urbana Común (Common urban): Schools located in urban areas where students receive four hours of classes per day. Typically, each school works on two shifts, one in the morning, from 8:30 to 12:30 and one in the afternoon, from 13:30 to 17:30. There is a CT in charge of each group. Students also attend classes by specialised teachers in the areas of physical education (PE), music and art. These schools can be located in any urban area and cover the full five quintiles of socio-economic classification. Students do not receive a complementary meal in these schools.

Tiempo Completo (Full time): Children attend school from 8:30 to 16:00 and receive three meals a day. Apart from following the official national

Socio-cultural indicators	Quintile 1	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5
Per cent of mothers with complete primary education or less	58	46.4	36.4	26.5	14
Per cent of mothers with complete secondary education or more	6.2	10.4	16.1	25.5	45
Per cent of children with one unsatisfied basic need	23.3	18.1	14.3	9.3	5.6
Per cent of homes with territorial disintegration	43.7	26.3	16.8	11.8	7.1
Per cent of homes with educational disintegration	13.2	8.5	5.9	4.5	2.3
Home appliance index	5.3	6.2	6.9	7.7	8.7

curriculum, there is a focus on the development of written language through play-based methodologies. Activities such as arts, PE and sports and music complete the school day. These schools are located in areas of extreme social vulnerability (ANEP website).¹

Tiempo extendido (Extended time): These schools work on a seven-hour day where students receive four hours of formal instruction by a CT, two hours of workshops and one hour for lunch and recreation. There are currently 49 extended time schools throughout the country. These schools are located across the quintiles 3, 4 and 5 (ANEP website).²

Aprender (Priority attention school): This refers to schools located in areas of structural vulnerability. The APRENDER programme is an inclusion programme that seeks to grant access and permanence in the educational system as well as achieve quality learning. These schools are typically located in the two lowest socio-economic quintiles (1 and 2) (ANEP website).³

Rural Común (Rural school): These are schools located in rural areas. There are over 1,000 rural schools located in Uruguay, 767 of them employing one single teacher to cover all levels of instruction. About 17,000 students attend these schools (ANEP website).⁴

De Práctica (Practicum): These schools are typically the ones used for teachers in training practicum. They can be urban, rural or priority attention schools. Apart from their regular CT, a student teacher is assigned to work with a specific group during a period of time. Student teachers and students of other related degrees (PE, music, educational psychology) also complete their practicum in these schools

Taking the number of students enrolled in each school, the distribution chart for 2017 would look like the graphic in figure 2.

As stated earlier, *Ceibal en Inglés* provides English language lessons in all 19 departments of the country where there are not enough teachers of English physically present. The geographical distribution of groups for 2017 is illustrated on the map on Figure 3.

Given that the programme was expanded to reach almost all urban schools in 2015, an even distribution of groups by level is found in the current data (2017):

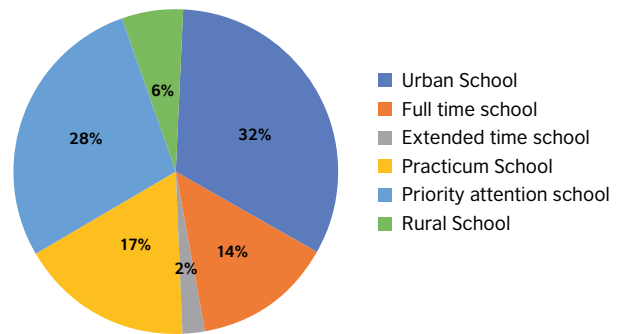


Figure 2. Student distribution by school type

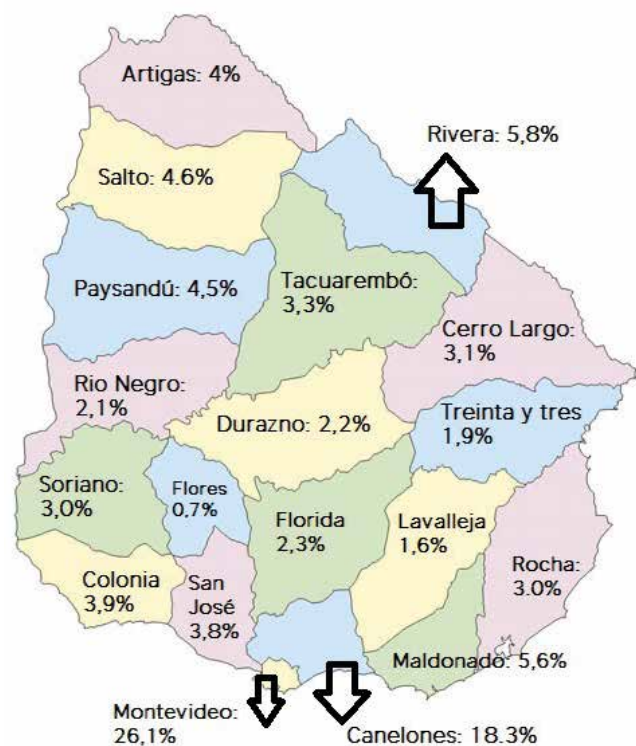


Figure 3. Group distribution by geographical location

34 per cent of groups correspond to the students in 4th grade (9/10-year olds) taking level 1, 33 per cent to 5th graders (10/11-year olds) taking level 2 and the final 33 per cent to 6th graders (11/12-year olds) taking level 3.

Research strategy

In order to understand how remote language learning works, the following questions were developed:

- How do students from diverse backgrounds respond to remote language teaching (RLT)?
- What are students' perceptions of RLT?
- How does RLT affect students' attitudes towards learning English?

1 <http://ceip.edu.uy/tiempo-completo-modelo-pedagogico-fundamentacion>

2 <http://ceip.edu.uy/ctx-caracteristicas/ctx-elementos>

3 <http://ceip.edu.uy/programas/aprender>

4 <http://ceip.edu.uy/centros-edu-rural>



Figure 4: Focus group in Artigas

The result of the assessment of the children has provided quantitative data related to the success of the programme, but it is important to also understand the children's perceptions of remote language learning.

In order to achieve this aim, two different data collection strategies were planned. First, *focus groups* with students in their final year of primary school were conducted. These 11-12-year-olds had three years of experience of remote language learning and so they were considered to have the cognitive maturity to be able to talk about their own experiences in a concrete way. Cohen et al. (2007:376) define focus groups as:

“A form of group interview, though not in the sense of a backwards and forwards between interviewer and group. Rather, the reliance is on the interaction within the group who discuss a topic supplied by the researcher ... the participants interact with each other rather than with the interviewer, such that the views of the participants can emerge ... It is from the interaction of the group that the data emerges.”

number that represented the student; each side of the card represented a choice of answer. In our case, we used A for true and B for false. Dichotomous responses such as this one allowed me to contrast the qualitative data offered by students in the first section of the interview. At the same time, “highly structured, closed questions are useful in that they can generate frequencies of response amenable to statistical treatment and analysis. They also enable comparisons to be made across groups in the sample” (Oppenheim 1992, in Cohen et al., 2007:321). This type of dichotomous response is “useful, for it compels respondents to come off the fence on an issue. It provides a clear, unequivocal response” (Cohen et al., 2007:322).

Students were presented with ten statements about remote teaching and they needed to state whether they considered the statement true or false



Figure 5: Plickers survey in Tacuarembó

according to their experience. The comments and reactions to the statements as well as the focus groups were transcribed by an independent transcriber and their answers analysed. Using this two-fold strategy allowed the verification quantitatively of what students responded in the focus group while at the same time offering a chance for the least outspoken students to express their views. It also catered for any language processing issues from interfering with students responding by reducing the amount of language to be processed by comparison to multiple choice questions or rating scales.

Twelve focus groups were carried out in eight schools representing seven out of the ten departments in Uruguay (those with the largest number of *Ceibal en Inglés* classes), totaling 100 participating students and covering three major types of schools (urban, *Aprender* and practicum) and all five socio-economic quintiles. The classes were selected by *Ceibal en Inglés* mentors, ensuring that each group had not suffered any major interruptions in teaching during the year. We established this condition given that it was important to understand how students learn when the programme works as planned. Students with three years of experience in the programme were surveyed, as they had more experience of remote learning.

The student voice

In this section, the results of both instances will be reported to present the students' unified point of view, which would be lost if the results were reported separately.

Learning English and learning English remotely

The initial aim was to identify how the students felt about studying English in general. 95 per cent of respondents stated that they enjoyed learning English. This result was similar across schools with

the exception of one school. In this particular urban school, where 50 per cent of the participating students attend private English lessons, agreement with this statement fell to 57 per cent. When asked to explain why, these students compared their face-to-face lessons and referred to the frequency of the lessons and the physical presence of the teacher as reasons for preferring these latter forms. When asked about the reasons for enjoying learning English, in seven out of the eight schools the most common reason reported referred to the global status of English. A girl from Tacuarembó explained that “English is a language that is used worldwide, even in China where they speak Chinese, they speak English too. Wherever you travel to, whatever you do, you will use English and this is why I like learning it.” A boy from Montevideo told us that, in his opinion, “knowing English opens doors”.

When asked whether they enjoyed learning English remotely, 93 per cent of all interviewed students provided an affirmative answer. Students reported an array of different reasons for this positive evaluation. The most commonly reported answer across all types of schools was to do with remote teaching methodology and materials. The focus on visual input and interaction seems to agree with these new generations where the image plays such an important role. A girl from Artigas explained: “Our RT uses images a lot. The tasks she gives us always bring images and that helps us, we like this a lot. I wish my teacher here did the same.” Other aspects of the methodology that the students reported they liked were the focus on project and group work and the use of games. The second most commonly reported reason lies in the characteristics of RTs and the bond they are able to establish over the screen. A boy from Tacuarembó described that: “What I like is that in spite of being with us through the screen, we also have a connection with her. It seems as if she were very close to us, like she is here in spite of being in Argentina.”

A third reason reported is the access to learning English remote language learning gives them. This response was equivalent in all schools regardless of geographical location or type. A boy from Canelones stated that: “I like learning English remotely because we don’t have the chance to have an English teacher at the school, and in this way we have the chance of learning English anyway.”

What is it like to learn English remotely?

Students were then asked about the specifics of learning English remotely. 51 per cent of them agreed with the statement that learning remotely was more difficult than learning face-to-face, 49 per cent disagreed. Only 14 per cent of students from schools in the lower socio-economic quintiles felt that learning English remotely was more difficult, whereas it was 100 per cent of those in schools with a higher

quintile. Possible explanations include the fact that many students from the lower socio-economic quintiles have not experienced learning English face-to-face, so they have no comparator. Students gave two main reasons for considering remote teaching more difficult than face-to-face teaching. One had to do with the fact that the RT does not have the chance to correct and offer feedback to performance during the class as often as their CT does. A boy from Paysandú told us about his experience: “What I find difficult is the distance, we have a great bond with our RT and she asks us what we don’t understand and explains it but she cannot look at our copybooks and tell us: ‘Look! You are copying this wrongly,’ or she cannot look at our projects before we present them to make them better as our CT does with the work we do with her.”

The second reason had to do with technology glitches. Though these are not common (cancellations due to technological problems account for 6.46 per cent of the scheduled lessons), students felt frustrated when they were engaged in their remote lesson and technology failed. A girl from Maldonado told us about a recent experience: “Our RT was explaining something really difficult and suddenly the image got cut off and then the audio. And then the screen went black. Our CT cut off the communication and the RT tried calling us again. It took them about ten minutes to get the connection back.” Although relatively rare, this illustrates the importance of reliability of technology in such programmes.

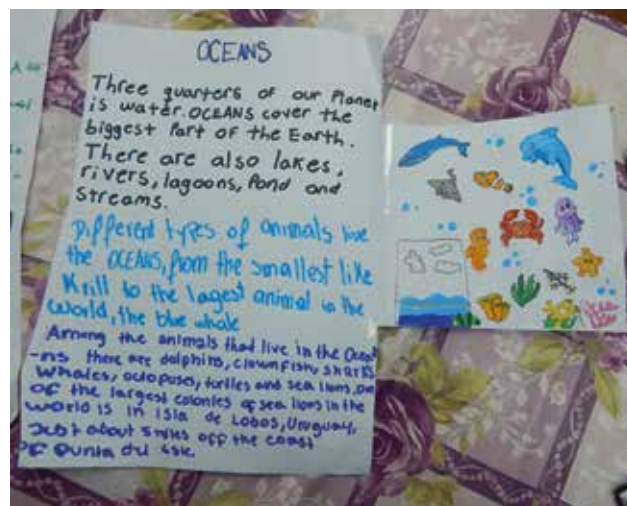


Figure 6: Sample of project work from Tacuarembó

When asked whether they felt they were learning English effectively in this way, 86 per cent of the students said it was true. A similar number stated that learning remotely was different from learning face-to-face. 70 per cent of the students acknowledged that they had learnt about other countries and ways of life through their remote lessons. This was even more apparent when their RTs

teach from far-away locations such as the Philippines. A girl from Artigas told us about their experience with their RT last year: “It was time for our remote lesson as usual and we saw our teacher wearing a strange costume. We didn’t understand what was going on. She told us they were celebrating Independence Day that day and all the staff at the remote teaching centre there were dressed in traditional costumes. She told us about how they celebrate it there and we, with the help of our CT, we told her about our Independence Day.”

The RTs

When students were asked whether they considered their RTs to be good, 100 per cent of the students answered positively. They were then asked about the reason for this assessment. Their responses were classified under two categories: personal characteristics and technical skills. A summary of their responses can be found in the table below.

The CTs

Even when students acknowledged that their CTs did not do follow-up lessons B and C, they stated the valuable support that their CTs provided when learning English remotely. A girl from Tacuarembó explained how their CT helped them to learn English: “Our teacher is a great support and help because she reinforces everything we learnt with our RT. She is in constant communication with our RT, they have a very good relationship. So they help each other with the work that we need to do.”

A boy from Salto gave a very specific example: “We watch the videos we saw in the remote lesson again

in class with our CT, she pauses the video and we look at the new words again, she explains what we don’t understand.” A girl from Montevideo told us that: “Our teacher takes photos of important things from the screen and of homework and then writes that on the blackboard and makes us copy in our copybooks.”

Looking forward

The aim of the *Ceibal en Inglés* primary programme is to provide initial language instruction to grade 4–6 students, taking them to as close as possible to an A2 level of the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) by the time they finish primary school. These students will then continue learning English with a face-to-face CT of English (CTE) in secondary education. English in high school is usually regarded as one of the difficult subjects students need to tackle. This is why 86 per cent of the students interviewed believe that they will be more successful when dealing with English in high school after having learnt English remotely. A boy from Montevideo told us about his hopes: “What we are learning now will be very helpful when we are in high school. This will be the foundation for what we will learn then.”

Finally, when students were asked whether they would like to be given the chance to learn something else remotely, 93 per cent stated that they would like that opportunity. When asked about what they would like to learn their answers stretched from other languages to subjects such as physics and chemistry. This relates to what was previously reported about students believing that remote teaching is an effective form of learning.

RT Skills	
Technical skills	Personal characteristics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses games and videos in all lessons • Helps students with pronunciation using games to repeat difficult or new words • Uses roulette with students’ names to appoint who has to speak. “We all need to pay attention because you never know when it’s your turn to talk or answer.” (Salto) • Uses group work frequently • “Zooms the camera in on students who are not paying attention or not doing what they have to do.” (Maldonado) • Explains things clearly and as many times as we need to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patience • “She’s interested that we learn.” (Canelones) • “She makes me feel at ease, I feel less intimidated with her on the screen than with a teacher in the class.” (Salto) • “She encourages us to learn.” (Artigas) • “She makes lessons fun, we never get bored.” (Tacuarembó)

Conclusions

Students had a lot to say about what it is like to learn English remotely. Overall, they valued the experience very positively, considering this an effective form of learning. They acknowledged the essential role both the RT and CT had in helping them achieve this aim. If the students' answers are compared with answers from RTs and CTs, it can be remarked that they both largely agree when identifying the essential features of effective remote teaching.

The communication and rapport between both the RT and CT is essential for students to feel supported and able to learn. The personal and technical characteristics of both professionals were also highlighted by the students as central aspects of the effectiveness of remote teaching. They acknowledged that even when distances were great, the RTs were able to establish a very close bond with them. The high quality of the technology used allowed this to happen by providing reliable real-time communication and interaction.

The communicative language teaching methodology used in remote teaching, which differs from what students are accustomed to experiencing in their classrooms, is an important factor for students, who find in remote lessons a form of learning that promotes pair and group work and makes use of songs and games as regular learning activities.

The students interviewed were also critical of some aspects of remote teaching. The technological glitches (only 6.56 per cent of scheduled lessons are cancelled due to this) during the remote lesson, the frequency in which they receive direct feedback on their performance from their RTs and the fact that RTs are not physically present to monitor their work were the most common criticisms students had.

The students interviewed came from different backgrounds, from different areas of the country, but they share one common and unique experience: they have learnt a language in a new and innovative way. For them, learning something remotely is now as usual as learning something face-to-face. They told us that they believe learning remotely is an effective way to learn.

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6

What skills do *Ceibal en Inglés* remote teachers need?

Verónica Pintos

- Team-teaching is key for *Ceibal en Inglés* remote teachers to perform effectively
- Classroom management at a distance appears to be the most difficult skill to develop
- Being comfortable with the use of learning technology, particularly that specific to videoconferencing, is also essential

This chapter examines the specific skills required to be effective in the context of teaching English remotely to state school primary children in Uruguay. The literature concerning teaching online and the skills required to do so is summarised, followed by an analysis of the results of a survey undertaken with remote teachers and academic managers working in *Ceibal en Inglés*.

Introduction

Remote teaching in *Ceibal en Inglés* incorporates elements seen in many other online language learning contexts that contain *synchronous* (i.e. in real time) teaching components. Where remote teaching in *Ceibal en Inglés* differs, however, is in its requirement for team-teaching. During the videoconferencing lesson (*lesson A*), the local classroom teacher (CT) facilitates interaction, while the remote teacher (RT) leads the teaching and learning. Further practice and learning is also facilitated by the CT in two follow-up lessons (*lessons B and C*), which is covered in a separate chapter dedicated to the CT. The focus of this chapter is on the role of the RT and, more specifically, on the specific skillset required for the remote teacher to be effective.

Remote language teaching

Remote language teaching is a form of *distance education*, i.e. a context “in which teaching ... occurs in a different place from learning” (Moore and Kearsley, 2004:12). Nowadays, this distance can be bridged by internet-mediated technology that can be either in real time (*synchronous*) or separated by time (*asynchronous*) (LaFrance and Beck, 2014; Moore and

Kearsley, 2004; cited in Siemens, Gašević, and Dawson, 2015).

In synchronous computer-mediated communication, the teacher can be in one place and the students, all together, in one other physical location, as is the case of the teaching in *Ceibal en Inglés*; or all of them (teacher and students) can be dispersed across different physical locations. In contrast, asynchronous communication is “not dependent upon teachers and students being present together at a specific time/place to conduct learning/teaching activities” (Berge, 1999:6).

Asynchronous learning often takes place using a *learning management system* (LMS), also called a *virtual learning environment* (VLE), which is “a web-based software application used to organise, implement and evaluate education” (Abdullateef, Elias, Mohamed, Zaidan and Zaidan, 2016:1). *Ceibal en Inglés* RTs are required to interact with students both synchronously and asynchronously using *Crea*, a rebranded version of *Schoology*, a social networking-based LMS that aims to connect “people, content and systems that fuel education” (Schoology, 2018).

Blended learning

Because of the presence of a local CT in the classroom, *Ceibal en Inglés* could also be regarded as an instance of *blended learning*, i.e. “a combination of technology and classroom instruction in a flexible approach to learning” (Bañados, 2006:534), which makes use of face-to-face and online communication elements to integrate traditional classroom instruction and internet-based technology (Neumeier, 2005; Graham, 2005; Hammond, 2015).

Use of learning technology

In *Ceibal en Inglés*, the ideal RT will be a language-teaching specialist with experience of young learners, who teaches synchronously via videoconferencing from a distant location and also guides learners asynchronously via *Crea* (Banegas,

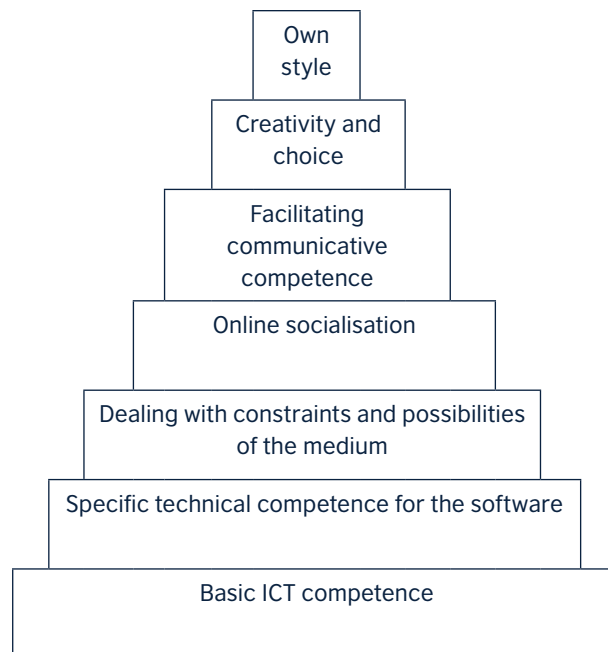
2015; Broveto, 2015; Boyce, 2015).

“The RT presents the language to be learnt and arranges practice activities with the help of the CT” (Stanley, 2015:2) and it can be argued that the use of “synchronous and asynchronous tools to support language learning demands not just technical mastery of a suite of tools, but a reconceptualising of the roles of both the teacher and learner, and of how they co-construct understanding through synchronous and asynchronous online interaction” (Comas-Quinn, 2011:25).

Ceibal en Inglés RTs teach lessons from small classrooms called teaching points (TPs) by initiating a point-to-point connection using videoconferencing from the TP to a classroom in the school. A remote control is available to the RT so that the image shown to the students can be adjusted and the RT can take control of the local camera in the school to zoom into individual students and virtually ‘move around’ the classroom. The remote control is also used to start and stop the call, control the microphone volume level at both the TP and school, share screens by splitting the TV screen into two to display content from the RT’s laptop, and change presentation views, among other functions. A laptop is used by the RT to present materials, which could be in the form of a presentation, an online song, video or game. RTs, therefore, need to be more proficient in the use of technology than a face-to-face teacher.

Of course, the specific skills needed to be an effective remote language teacher go beyond the acquisition of learning technology skills, but there is a basic competency level required of all remote teachers. Hampel and Stickler (2005:316) carried out research in order to identify skills required of online language teachers, presenting a skills pyramid as the output of their investigation (see below). It was suggested that teachers need to develop these skills building on “one another ... from the most general skills forming a fairly broad base to an apex of individual and personal styles.”

Hampel and Stickler’s pyramid suggests teachers require time and practice becoming familiar with ICT (information and communications technology) before they can start to take full advantage of the affordances of learning technology. Although it was developed some time ago, this still rings true today.



The pyramid of skills by Hampel and Stickler (2005)

Semio-pedagogical skills and telepresence

According to Neill and Caswell (1993:9), it is important for teachers to take into account non-verbal signals “such as facial expression, head and body posture, hand movements” when teaching, as they can reveal much about students and whether they understand what is being presented to them.

When teaching online, some researchers believe it is equally or even more important for teachers to develop their awareness and understanding of semio-pedagogical skills so they understand the contribution that semiotic resources such as “the use of gestures, head and body movements, gaze and facial expressions” can make to learning (Cohen, 2015). According to Develotte et al. (2013:294), the teacher using videoconferencing can exemplify and facilitate learning by careful use of body language, including “smiles, nods or frowns”.

Anderson et al. (2001:3) introduce the concept of *telepresence* by stating that “for learning to occur in this lean medium of communication ... a strong element of what we refer to as teaching presence is required.” Telepresence is *teaching presence at a distance*, as Develotte et al. (2010) call it, which means for them “the different ways in which [technologies] allow us to be present to one another and to be aware of other people’s presence”.

To the student in the classroom, this refers to how far it feels a teacher is actually physically present in the local classroom (Develotte et al., 2010:298), although they are really in a different physical location.

Research strategy

In order to further determine the skills required of an effective RT, a survey was carried out and a cross-section of RTs and academic managers were interviewed from seven remote teaching centres (RTCs) in Uruguay, the Philippines and Argentina. The survey focused on the skills the participants believed RTs need to have. Documents produced by *Ceibal en Inglés* quality managers were also analysed. The subsequent data analysis identified the skills that were specific to the project and those that were transferable from face-to-face to RLT.

Data analysis

The following skills specific to remote teaching were cited by survey respondents as important to have or develop.

Classroom management at a distance. All of those interviewed stated that “*classroom management at a distance*” was an important skill RTs needed to develop, with one academic manager pointing out that “*RTs should be able to ... get and maintain students’ attention throughout the class*” and need to concentrate on “*the delivery of clear instructions, and the setting and administration of time for each activity*”.

Classroom management at a distance often represents a challenge to RTs, who, for example, as one RT put it, “*cannot physically approach a student who is misbehaving*”.

Experienced RTs learn that in order to be effective they need to “*depend on the teacher on the other side to help with classroom management*”. In the words of another RT, “*the CT represents my hands and legs in the local classroom*”. Support from the CT includes organising the children into groups or pairs, moving furniture around, dealing with disruptive students, helping learners access relevant exercises on their ‘ceibalitas’ (laptops provided by Plan Ceibal), encouraging individuals to speak out loud and answer questions, and overall ensuring that students are on task. The role of the CT in keeping motivation high is also important – a disinterested CT can negatively impact the overall mood in the classroom. This is covered in more detail in the chapter dedicated to the CT.

The importance of classroom management is echoed in observation reports prepared by quality managers, which contain instances suggesting RTs need to “*establish positive rapport with the students and the CT*”. To help this, advice is often given encouraging RTs to “*use names to address everyone in the local classroom*,” “*be responsive to energy and pace during the lesson*,” and to “*respond to the students’ and the CT’s contributions to keep them engaged and participating in lesson A*.” This, of

course, is not specific to the remote classroom, but, nonetheless needs to be taken into account.

Team-teaching and co-ordination. Most RTs stressed the importance of having regular, weekly meetings or other communication (referred to as *co-ordination* in *Ceibal en Inglés*) with their CTs to decide on the best way to approach each lesson plan and “*to exchange information about the class or the progress of individual students*”. One RT mentioned that “*there is very little room for classroom management and delivery of lesson A without co-ordination*” and another that “*effective relationships are at the heart of our work. It is a two-way exchange: we learn from all those we interact with and they learn from us*.”

Co-ordination helps team-teaching because “*the bond with the CTs gives us the feeling that the message is delivered and the students can go through different weeks successfully and they enjoy [them]*.” This was echoed by another RT: “*If you have a very good relationship with the CT, she contributes and she helps you out with many other things in the class*.”

One academic manager pointed out that “*the teacher has to be open minded enough so as to accept that she’s not the only leader in the class, that leadership is meant to be shared with somebody else who knows a lot about other things that they do not know about, so this issue of sharing leadership is fundamental for an RT*.”

The mode of communication for this co-ordination was not perceived as being important, and RTs listed a variety of different ways, including connecting via the videoconferencing equipment, using email, instant messaging applications on their phones (e.g. *Whatsapp*), or software such as *Skype*, *Zoom* or *Big Blue Button* (web conferencing software integrated into *Crea*, the learning management system used by Uruguayan schools).

The ability and confidence to co-ordinate in Spanish with the CT was not mentioned by the RTs in Uruguay and Argentina, but was a particular concern of the RTs working from the Philippines, whose native language was not Spanish. This is a requirement because the average English language level of the CTs is low (A1 or below), so, as one RT working from the Philippines put it, “*not being able to communicate in Spanish or English with the CT would be a problem*.”

Learning technology. Familiarity with learning technology was cited as a key requirement by everyone interviewed, not surprisingly considering the requirement for RTs to manage videoconferencing equipment and other technology available on their laptops. Most RTs had had some experience with learning technology before starting as remote teachers, having used it themselves in their practice, or studied it while training to be a

teacher. The more experienced RTs reported that they also “used computers in face-to-face lessons, preparing presentations and online activities”.

Although remote teaching could not take place without technology, RTs are clear that this is not the most important factor. One RT expressed this clearly when she said: “We get anxious about technology in RLT, whereas we should focus our attention on creating a strong relationship with the CT and students. Technology is a means but it could never be understood as the end.”

Technical support. Although the use of high-end videoconferencing minimises technical problems, RTs pointed out the need to act quickly if and when it does fail. “Knowing who to contact” and “having a plan B” were mentioned by RTs. One academic manager said they looked for a calm attitude in RTs: “If this fails, we do that, and if that fails, we do something else. They (RTs) have to be flexible and accept that technology sometimes fails.” As an example, an RT and CT may have a back-up plan of which materials the CT is to use with the children in the (rare) event that the videoconferencing equipment fails.

Learning management system (LMS). Crea, the LMS, is used to share lesson plans, teaching materials and self-study materials, and RTs keep a register of learners’ performance and needs to provide them with extra practice. It is expected that RTs guide their students on platform use and provide access to relevant materials by hiding some or making others visible. As one RT noted, this requires RTs to be “technologically savvy enough so as to make the most of the opportunities that asynchronous communication offers”.

Use of the camera. Effective RTs develop the ability to use the classroom camera’s pan and zoom functionality to monitor students during pair and group work, and to select specific students for activities. One RT said she used the remote control to move the camera as if it were “an extension of my body” so as “to make up for the fact that I cannot walk around the classroom.”

RTs also make use of the zoom function of the camera in their teaching point to show the movement of their lips when, for example, teaching pronunciation: “I zoom the camera in on my face and I try to make them look at my mouth ... and [say], ‘look you have to put your tongue up and it has to touch your upper teeth’, and they [students] repeat, but you have to focus the camera on yourself”.

Telepresence. One academic manager stressed the importance of RTs developing “telepresence, which is having good presence through the screen”. One RT mentioned telepresence as “those moments in which

you gain students’ confidence and attention through the screen” and another said “you’re not there but your students start feeling that as natural, rapport maybe faster ... they get used to you and they know the structure of the class, so they know what comes after that and they start feeling more relaxed, making the children and the CT feel that you are physically there with them”.

Body language. RTs understand the importance of moving around in their teaching points (TPs) as well as “exaggerated body language and gestures,” mentioning the importance of dancing, mimicking and pointing to objects in gaining and keeping the attention of students: “You have to take it to the extreme because you’re trying to convey a message from a distance. Showing is more important than telling and there has to be a 100 per cent correspondence between what you say and what you show with your body.”

Voice control. One RT said: “When I started teaching remotely, the children told me not to shout. I wasn’t shouting, it’s my regular voice ... So I had to change that or use the volume control buttons on the remote control to lower my voice as if I were lowering the volume of a TV set”. Most RTs mentioned the need to speak more quietly because “the microphone is very sensitive and your voice is perceived loudly”.

Some RTs play with this to gain their students’ attention: “When they are not listening, I sometimes start whispering and they start saying ‘we cannot hear’ and ask if I turned off the microphone.”

Conclusion

The focus of this chapter has been on the skills a remote teacher working in the context of *Ceibal en Inglés* at primary school level requires, specifically those which are not also required of a teacher working in a face-to-face context. Principally, these skills are related to relationship building for team-teaching, classroom management at a distance and familiarity with learning technology.

As well as two years’ minimum experience of teaching primary young learners, *Ceibal en Inglés* also requires teachers to develop new skills and adapt skills already learnt through face-to-face teaching to the remote teaching context. Understanding this means that the training and teacher development offered can focus on those skills specific to the *Ceibal en Inglés* context.

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6.1

On being a remote teacher

Verónica Pintos

Remote teacher: Florencia Colombi	Started: 2014
British Council Argentina Remote Teaching Centre	Location: Buenos Aires, Argentina

Using the videoconferencing equipment for the first time required training: *“I had to learn to incorporate technology in a way that was not disruptive. At the very beginning, this made teaching even more unpredictable than it normally is. During my first remote lessons I was worried about possible technical problems that could take place. Naturally, learning to handle all the technological devices during the remote lesson takes time and practice.”*

Introduction

Florencia Colombi was born and raised in Olavarría, 350 km from the city of Buenos Aires. Florencia started studying English when she was eight and, after finishing secondary school, she studied to be a teacher. She recalled: *“I decided to give it a chance because people said, ‘you’ll love it. You have the personality. You have the qualities to be a teacher.’ And they were not mistaken.”*

Curiosity about remote language teaching

Florencia became a remote teacher in June 2014. At first, she was full of doubt as to what she was supposed to do, but also bursting with curiosity and enthusiasm about her new job: *“I knew I was supposed to deliver lessons to primary schools in Uruguay. I asked myself, ‘how I am supposed to do that?’ I knew I was not going to be travelling every day to teach there. But everything soon made sense and this was more appealing than going from one school to another in a city that I didn’t know.”*

Getting ready to be a remote teacher

As soon as it was confirmed that Florencia would start teaching remotely, she participated in induction training, which included observation of a remote lesson. Florencia remembered the training well: *“After the induction, I spent the whole weekend rehearsing but not really knowing what I was going to do. I feared the students would just ignore me. I was going to be there just like a TV character ... like background noise.”*

Her first remote lesson

Before her first lesson, Florencia spent a long time reviewing the lesson plans and teaching materials. She said she *“started writing notes, considering the context, what the students might ask, writing questions and possible answers ... and thinking of potential situations.”* Florencia then felt she was ready to teach her first remote lesson.

As time passed, Florencia learnt that teaching remotely is far more interactive than she first thought: *“When I teach, I focus on interaction patterns, group dynamics, I try to foster the classroom teachers’ involvement and engage them in the remote lesson.”* Being proficient in the use of the videoconferencing technology and utilising the remote control, the camera and the laptop while teaching helps her with this.

Challenges faced

In 2014, Florencia was a novice remote teacher. She described herself as *“absolutely new in every aspect.”* This was her first formal teaching experience and she had to cope with unfamiliar aspects of teaching, such as managing the remote lesson, co-ordinating with the classroom teacher and using *Crea*, the *Ceibal en Inglés* learning management system (LMS), with her students and the classroom teacher. She started using *Crea*, exploring the LMS and looking for ways she could use it to enhance learning.

Florencia was also concerned about bonding when teaching remotely: *“My greatest fear was not to be able to create rapport or bond with the children as I would do in a face-to-face lesson. I remember imagining all possible scenarios before my first remote lesson, thinking that no technological device would compensate for not being in the classroom, fearing that students would feel inhibited, as they had to use a microphone to participate, and thinking that this would certainly have an impact on the lesson.”*

“The main difficulties involved adapting what I knew about teaching to a completely different context. Most of what I had learnt at college was meant to work in regular, face-to-face classrooms. However, in remote language teaching, I had to learn to manage the classroom from a distance to find effective ways of approaching young learners.” Florencia explained that the use of body language is very important in this context: *“Remote teachers tend to rely on gestures and body language a lot, as an aid for teaching, when giving or modelling instructions, for example.”*

Becoming experienced

Florencia learnt how to become the proficient remote teacher she is today through experience: *“I was not sure how to deliver a lesson in this way. Much of what I had learnt at the teacher training college was not directly applicable in this new situation. For example, with group work or pair work, I was told I had to monitor by walking around the classroom. I couldn’t do that in my remote lessons. So, I used the remote control to zoom in and out to virtually ‘walk around’ the local classroom.”*

When asked about the strategies she used to overcome the challenges she faced as a novice remote teacher, Florencia responded: *“I organised myself and the learning environment. I tried to set clear classroom routines; I started all my lessons in the same way.”*

Since then, she has modified some routines but still relies on them: *“I first say hello to the students in English, then I address the classroom teacher in Spanish – always in Spanish. I did this from the very beginning. And you see that they like it. They start talking to you, and tell you things like, ‘You won’t imagine how talkative the kids are today!’ or ‘The public holiday has not helped in completing tasks’. When they say things like that you notice they are feeling comfortable with you.”*

Florencia has grown professionally as a remote teacher. She feels more comfortable in her remote lesson nowadays: *“I can deal with challenges that in the first year would have taken me ages and now I can spot issues within the first month.”* This is the result of her constant search for new strategies and skills that beforehand she did not believe possible.

Developing new skills

Florencia has not only learnt how best to communicate with Uruguayan classroom teachers over the past four years, but she also knows how best to bond and build rapport with her students; remotely, especially important to compensate for the physical distance that separates the remote teacher from the children in the brick-and-mortar classroom.

Florencia recalled that *“what I found most interesting was building rapport with students, as I was not physically there.”* Co-ordinating with her classroom teacher was key: *“For one group in particular, I remember I could not see them properly due to the way the furniture was arranged in the classroom. so I came to an agreement with the classroom teacher to have a seating arrangement that would allow me to see them all.”*

Other strategies that Florencia implemented included those *“related to the way in which the videoconference equipment settings can be used for*

teaching, such as by changing the display settings, sharing and stop sharing screen appropriately, zooming in and out on myself and on specific students, moving the camera and muting the classroom microphone for certain games.”

Team-teaching

One of the key success factors in Ceibal en Inglés is learning to team-teach and share the classroom with another teacher. Florencia supported her classroom teachers by patiently going through what she was going to do in the lesson. To help them, she prepared summaries of what she was going to teach and carefully explained how this related to lessons B and C. She recalled: *“I thought this person needed to teach English lessons and I needed to guide that person. What if someone asked me to teach Maths? I know nothing about Maths. I wouldn’t know how to begin. So I prepared a summary for every class.”*

Working together again

In 2017, Florencia had the opportunity to teach with one of the first classroom teachers she worked with in 2014, and found the magic was there again: *“I’m working with one of the teachers I had in my first year. When I met her again she said she was so happy to be working with me again ... she told me, ‘you taught me this and I used it all last year and I’m using it again.”*

The second time they met was a surprise for both of them. Florencia was asked to substitute a remote teacher who had left and *“it was only then that I realised I already knew the classroom teacher. She was surprised to see me again. We had a great first class; as we already knew each other, we felt comfortable working together, which helped create a warm atmosphere in the classroom. After that first lesson, she asked me to continue as remote teacher for her group.”*

Continuity of team-teaching, Florencia said *“can make a difference in this project; it takes time to build rapport with students and with the classroom teacher. It also takes time to build trust and understand each other’s perspective. For the second year this classroom teacher and I worked together, we already knew each other’s ways. Communication was fluent and effective, which helped me build rapport with the students.”*

The difficulties of managing a lesson at a distance

In 2017, Florencia taught many courses remotely, but she particularly remembers the following class she found difficult to manage from a distance, especially because the classroom teacher could not control the class.

The class consisted of 24 sixth grade students in what Ceibal en Inglés calls an APRENDER school (a priority attention school, located in a vulnerable area). During their first English lesson “the students seemed enthusiastic and eager to be part of this whole new experience of learning through videoconferencing, but even the simplest activities took longer than expected as they got distracted easily.” At first, Florencia tried to maintain a previously agreed upon seating arrangement, “but students would keep changing their places making it difficult to remember their names.” The classroom teacher’s lack of involvement during lesson A, together with behavioural problems, such as standing up and moving around the classroom, talking to each other and not respecting classroom rules, led to problems teaching the lesson and the students’ decreasing interest and expectations.

Even though remote teacher and classroom teacher held regular co-ordination meetings, the situation did not change: “I used to have regular meetings with the teacher to find ways of engaging students and improving their performance. During the meetings, the teacher would tell me students misbehaved all week long. When we asked them to remain in the same place for their English lessons, they would just ignore this request. Students were not used to listening to each other. While one of them was speaking, the others would stand up, move around the classroom or just leave.” Florencia believes that “the way these students behaved during the remote lessons reflected the way they behaved the rest of the week during their face-to-face lessons with the classroom teacher.”

So Florencia decided it was time for a change: “I implemented a game to control the class, a game in which in lesson A students would work and play in teams, and after every class they would get points for their participation and for solving activities.” As time went on, Florencia perceived that this strategy was working: “students who used to be reluctant to participate found a purpose and showed a sense of responsibility, as they knew that their behaviour would have an impact on the final result that their team would get.”

The other face of remote language teaching

Not all remote lessons are difficult to manage. Florencia remembers a group of sixth graders, about 30 students with different levels of language proficiency and different needs, but they all respected each other and followed classroom rules. “We created a bond immediately; we established clear routines. At the beginning of each lesson, we would share something about the weather, their week, any birthdays coming soon, etc. One of the units from level three required them to write short stories in the past, and by the time we finished they were so proud of

their productions that I decided to create a quiz. I asked them to re-read each other’s stories for the following remote lesson. Students worked on their computers in groups, answering the questions I had created in CREA. They had fun and recognised each other’s work and creativity.”

What’s next?

In answer to this question, Florencia thought long and hard and replied: “I’d like to be part of the whole process of remote teaching, not only to deliver the class, but also to be part of the materials development, thinking how to approach a remote lesson.”

7

The experience from the other side of the screen: classroom teachers in *Ceibal en Inglés*

Silvia Rovegno

- 84 per cent of classroom teachers (CTs) consider remote learning an effective way of learning
- CTs mainly see teaching through videoconferencing as a way to democratise knowledge and bridge the gap between social groups in Uruguay
- Remote teaching has brought benefits to teaching other subjects, especially the teaching of the students' own mother tongue
- 49 per cent of CTs identify remote teaching of English as a tool for their own professional development

Although the focus of attention in *Ceibal en Inglés* is often on the utilisation of videoconferencing equipment to teach English in places where otherwise it would not be possible for students to learn, perhaps the most innovative aspect of the programme is the unique role the local CT plays. The focus of this chapter is on this role and particularly on how the CTs themselves feel about what they do and *Ceibal en Inglés* as a whole. Research was undertaken with a cross-section of CTs around the country to find out the ways their participation in it has influenced their professional lives and identify the impact *Ceibal en Inglés* has had on the other side of the screen.

Introduction

The effectiveness of *Ceibal en Inglés* largely rests upon the efforts of two types of education professionals who come from different pedagogical traditions: primary school education and foreign language learning. The local primary CT and remote teacher of English (RT) come together on a weekly basis to pursue the goal of teaching English to primary school students in state institutions across Uruguay.

Arguably, successful learning depends mainly on the local primary CTs, who are with the children for two-thirds of their English lessons. Despite this, not only are CTs non-specialists in language teaching,

but they either have a very basic knowledge of English, or no English at all.

Uruguayan primary teachers

There are around 3,100 CTs participating in *Ceibal en Inglés* from all provinces of the country and teaching at all types of schools (including urban, rural and *priority attention* schools). Together, these teachers facilitate language learning to some 80,000 students.

In order to become a classroom teacher at a state primary school, individuals must possess an initial teaching degree, specialising in primary education, awarded by one of the *Institutos Normales* (IINN) or *Institutos de Formación Docente* (IFDs) in Uruguay. The Uruguayan state teacher training body, *Consejo de Formación en Educación* (CFE), part of the *Administración Nacional de Educación Pública* (ANEP), the National Administration of Public Education, is responsible for both developing initial training and continuous professional development. The teaching degree takes four years to complete. The curriculum fosters practical and theoretical knowledge in three key areas: literacy, numeracy and pedagogy. English language instruction in this degree is limited to a one-year course in the final year, is focused mainly on developing academic reading skills, and the student-teachers are not required to possess any previous knowledge of the language.

Available statistics from 2014–15 indicate that 90 per cent of student-teachers are women with an average age of 22 when entering their first year of studies. Further studies show that 30 per cent of student-teachers work part or full-time during the completion of their studies (Consejo de Formación de Educación, 2015).

Most primary schools in Uruguay operate on two four-hour shifts, and children attend either in the morning or the afternoon. Normally, CTs work 20 hours a week with a single class of students either in the morning or afternoon shift. Many CTs work in the same building in the morning and afternoon, or in two different schools, with two different classes of

students. They are the main point of contact for the children when they are at school and are responsible for delivering the primary curriculum, which covers the subjects Literacy, Mathematics, Natural Sciences and Social Sciences.

The role of the CT in *Ceibal en Inglés*

Ceibal en Inglés works with a weekly lesson cycle (see figure 1 below), which includes co-ordination and three English lessons. The CT has a clearly defined role in this cycle.

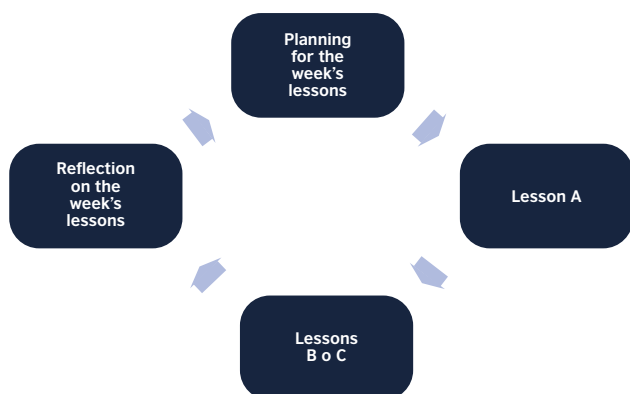


Figure 1: *Ceibal en Inglés* weekly lesson cycle, Banfi and Rettaroli (2012)

In lesson A, the videoconferencing lesson led by the RT, both the CT and RT are responsible for the successful delivery of the lesson. This requires teamwork and planning, achieved through *co-ordination* (the term used in *Ceibal en Inglés* for the weekly meeting of the RT and CT). In particular, the CT is responsible for the students' attitude to English, ensuring the class starts on time and the students pay attention during the lesson, and they bring along the previously agreed materials (including laptops if required).

When it comes to classroom management, CTs usually:

- arrange the seating
- organise pair and group work
- manage the noise level so that learning can take place
- monitor the students to make sure they are on task.

In lessons B and C the role of the CT is to facilitate language practice. They do this without the presence of the RT, using detailed lesson plans that are written in Spanish, and which have clearly outlined the steps to follow. Any changes to the

lesson plan must be agreed and discussed during co-ordination with the RT.

Co-ordination always involves the discussion of the weekly cycle by the RT and CT and may result in the teachers adapting the lesson plan to the needs of a particular class. CTs should then follow the plan during the two 45-minute practice and recycling sessions of what was presented in lesson A with the students. According to the *Ceibal en Inglés* weekly lesson cycle protocol (Ceibal en Inglés, 2016:7), CTs should:

- teach students to differentiate between reliable and non-reliable sources
- follow activities supported by the lesson plans found in the LMS (*Crea*)
- ensure concentration and focus on the tasks
- set up work in stages
- deal with frustration, such as when internet does not work by providing a written task instead
- Help students conceptualise and place English in the students' cultural context.

The true innovation of *Ceibal en Inglés*

As previously mentioned, because the RTs are beamed into schools and displayed on a TV screen, one might think that the innovation of *Ceibal en Inglés* is due to the use of technology. However, as Gabriela Kaplan, *Ceibal en Inglés* Co-ordinator, commented in an interview for this chapter: “Many people believe that *Ceibal en Inglés* is about technology. It’s certainly the enabling factor, but *Ceibal en Inglés* is more about the people, it’s about the transformative power that technology has in making the impossible possible; it’s their individual stories and experiences that I’m interested in.”

In order to achieve this, Kaplan believes that each CT needs “to step out of their comfort zone and take on the role of enabler of learning rather than their usual role as transmitter of knowledge”. The CT also has “experience as a learner and can discriminate reliable sources from others, and can, most importantly, help students find the necessary organisation, work ethic and adult support to guide their learning” (Brovetto, 2016). They are, therefore, responsible for putting the programme into practice even though many have little or no knowledge of the target language.

This is made possible in part by the programme design (lesson plans for the whole weekly cycle, co-ordination with RTs, mentors to support their work, face-to-face training sessions) and by the CTs commitment to it. Before starting *Ceibal en Inglés*,

CTs take an online introductory training course, which outlines the programme and their role in it. They also have access to another course called *Desafíos (Challenges)*, specially developed online continuing professional development (CPD) that allows CTs that have already started teaching to refine their practice and share successful strategies to deal with common issues arising from the programme. Both of these were written with the *Ceibal en Inglés* CT specifically in mind. Additionally, they are given the opportunity to learn English through a self-access course in which they can improve their own use and knowledge, guided by a tutor.

Language learning and teacher knowledge

Many authors have tried to define the different types of knowledge that are needed to facilitate language learning. Scott Thornbury (2013) identifies three core knowledge areas which are essential in order to teach a foreign language: *subject matter knowledge*, *general pedagogical knowledge* and *contextual knowledge*. The first one refers to the content to be taught, in this case English language. General pedagogical knowledge refers to the knowledge about the processes of teaching and learning. Lesson planning, classroom management and assessment fall into this category. The latter makes reference to understanding the contextual factors that are present and might affect the students' learning, such as socio-economic status, family academic orientation (Tsui, 2003).

In *Ceibal en Inglés*, these three areas are covered by two individuals, the remote teacher (RT) and the classroom teacher (CT). See RT and CT knowledge table below.

It is clear, then, that both professionals are needed for effective teaching and learning in *Ceibal en Inglés*. One cannot work without the other.

Research strategy

In order to research the impact that *Ceibal en Inglés* has had on CTs, and to examine its effect on the schools at large, a decision was made to examine teacher cognition. Teacher cognition refers to what teachers think, know and believe about their practices (Borg, 2009).

After consulting *Ceibal en Inglés* mentors and RTs, a group of 60 CTs was identified to take part in the study. These CTs were chosen because they were known to be teachers who fully embrace their role in *Ceibal en Inglés*. In other words, these CTs all take an active part in the programme, co-ordinate on a weekly basis, follow the lesson plans and facilitate lessons B and C. Forty-five of the CTs agreed to take part in the research and they were interviewed individually or in groups, some face to face, and others via videoconferencing or phone.

Profile of the interviewees

The CTs interviewed represented 15 of the 19 departments of Uruguay. Thirty-three per cent came from Montevideo, the capital city; 13 per cent from Canelones, the second largest province; nine per cent from Maldonado, the third largest province. Fifty-eight per cent taught in urban schools; 29 per cent in *priority attention* schools; and nine per cent in rural schools, where they usually taught more than one grade together because of numbers. Only four per cent taught in schools where children attend full-time (i.e. morning and afternoon), with the others teaching either a morning or afternoon shift.

In terms of their experience of *Ceibal en Inglés*, 25 per cent had taken part since the pilot programme or started in the first year of implementation (i.e. four to five years of experience), 44 per cent had between two and three years' experience. Fifty-five per cent of those interviewed were at the time of the interview also studying a self-access English course with the help of a tutor. All interviews were carried out in Spanish, transcribed and translated.

Subject matter knowledge	The RTs are all qualified English language teachers with specialist knowledge in teaching young learners. The CTs' knowledge of English is limited. However, they are given the chance to study with the help of a tutor online.
General pedagogic knowledge	Both professionals come from different pedagogical traditions. As this knowledge has developed from their training and experience in face-to-face contexts, CTs and RTs must transfer those skills to the particularities of the programme. In the case of CTs, they are involved in face-to-face interaction with their students in an area they are not specialists in. Hence, the challenge still remains.
Contextual knowledge	CTs know the students' personal and learning stories, the context and the resources available <i>in situ</i> to learn the language.

The view from the other side of the screen

How do you feel about the remote teaching of English?

- 88 per cent were in favour of having English lessons taught remotely
- 12 per cent would prefer to have an English teacher in the class taking full responsibility for the students' learning

When asked what the positive factors of *Ceibal en Inglés* were, 40 per cent highlighted that remote teaching “was inclusive” or said it enabled the “democratisation of knowledge”.

The response of one CT from Canelones teaching at a *priority attention* school was typical: “I believe that this is an effective way of learning that can reach all ... it enlarges our students' world knowledge. We don't know in this context if they will use it in their daily lives for work or not. However, we know that it helps them build more knowledge and develop their thinking skills. Sometimes students are so motivated by the programme that they want to learn more and have private lessons. I think they have got it right with *Ceibal en Inglés*.”

The second most common reason for their agreement with *Ceibal en Inglés* had to do with the introduction of technology in compulsory primary education. One CT from Salto, in her second year of *Ceibal en Inglés*, explained that “this is a new way of learning. Sometimes, we teachers are stuck in old, traditional ways of teaching and learning. It is difficult for teachers such as me because we learnt in a different way but this is a new generation and they learn this way.”

Other reasons why CTs were in favour of *Ceibal en Inglés* concerned the students' success in learning English and an increase in motivation. An experienced CT from Tacuarembó stated: “This is a good experience in my opinion; kids learn, the remote teachers are able to establish good bonds with them.”

The role of the CT in *Ceibal en Inglés* during lesson A

Defining their role in the programme proved to be a harder task for the CTs interviewed. When they answered the question, the following were words were typically mentioned:



One CT from Maldonado teaching at an urban school had this to say about her role: “The classroom teacher and the remote teacher are a team. The RT needs the CT to get to know the realities in the group and how to deal with certain students. We have students who might have behavioural disorders, some form of cognitive impairment or sometimes just have a poor academic performance. These children need special attention and the CT needs to let the RT know about them to adjust the plan or ask us for help. This is something I co-ordinate with my RT, so we can help these children understand English a bit more each day.”

This statement also identifies the central role that co-ordination plays in the remote teaching and learning of English in Uruguayan classrooms.

Classroom management was also frequently mentioned by the CTs who were interviewed. One CT from Tacuarembó defined her role during lesson A as follows: “The CT has to be there, firstly, to deal with behaviour. But we also need to give a hand in setting up the activities, putting the students into teams or pairs, naming students. We also need to help students, in particular those who have problems.”

CTs spoke about using a variety of strategies to help students with their English learning. The most commonly mentioned were:

- “Sit students in the same place and share the seating plan so that the RT learns the students' names and builds a stronger bond with them. We can also arrange seating so weaker students are either closer to me, or to a strong student.”
- “I make students wear name tags sufficiently large to be visible on the screen, to help the RT learn their names.”
- Use of gestures and body language to deal with behavioural issues rather than linguistic ones, so as not to interfere with the flow of the remote

lesson. Usually, this is accompanied by the CT placing themselves next to the screen so all students can see them and the CT can see what the students are doing.

- “I ask the RT to display words and phrases on the screen when students do not understand the spoken input. In this way, they can see and hear the language.”
- Use of translation (when the CT’s English level allows it) of what the RT is saying as a last resort if comprehension breaks down.
- “I make sure that the materials and resources agreed during weekly co-ordination are available to use in class.”
- Monitor while students are working in pairs/groups to make sure they are on task and performance falls within the agreed expectations.
- Scaffold student production and understanding when in difficulty, e.g. allowing them to work in pairs to produce a response.
- “I sometimes use flashcards to indicate the word the RT is asking about or using.”
- “I look for students that want to participate but who may not be visible on the RT’s screen.”
- Some CTS use a *back channel* with the RT, using, for example, *WhatsApp*, to draw attention to something that she needs to know during lesson A, without making the students aware of this.

The role of the CT in Ceibal en Inglés during lessons B and C

During lesson A there is general agreement among CTs that their role is mainly one of support. This changes in lessons B and C. One CT from Montevideo with four years’ experience summarised her role as follows: “*The CT has to carry on working on what was taught in lesson A during lessons B and C. We start by making a revision of lesson A, sometimes even playing the videos and songs again or looking at the RTs’ flipchart. There are many occasions in which new questions come up and, as CTs, we must deal with them, either by looking for the answers online, using the knowledge we have acquired in the online English course or by sending the question to the RT. Our main aim in lessons B and C is, for me, to promote a thorough practice of what has been presented in lesson A.*”

It is in lessons B and C that CTs need to make use of their pedagogical knowledge to deliver two follow-on language practice sessions. Here is where we also see how they are able to identify features of second language pedagogy and put them into

practice in their lessons B and C. The ten strategies most commonly cited by CTs for lessons B and C are:

- Hold lessons B and C on fixed days and times or merge the lessons into one longer revision and consolidation session following the guidelines from their RT.
- “*I integrate routines used in Lesson A in the start of each school day to reinforce learning, including taking the register in English, writing the date and time on the board in English, and telling the time in English.*”
- Start lessons B and C (or the merged B/C) lesson with songs and videos used in lesson A as a way to review language that has been presented.
- “*I encourage students that study English privately to act as classroom assistants by explaining the grammar points to their peers or assisting us by correcting pronunciation.*”
- Use digital flashcards as a revision activity for the central contents of the week.
- Ask RTs to send recordings of difficult words to play back in lessons B and C so as to provide a reliable model for choral repetition.
- Use posters around the class of the main vocabulary seen in the week/month to enhance learning.
- Have students produce digital posters with the vocabulary of the week.
- When possible, encourage students to work independently online in the LMS (*Crea2*).
- Integrate the voluntary *Ceibal en Inglés* contests (e.g. online safety poster competition) into the syllabus to help students consolidate learning and offer extra practice.

Is Ceibal en Inglés an effective way of helping your students learn?

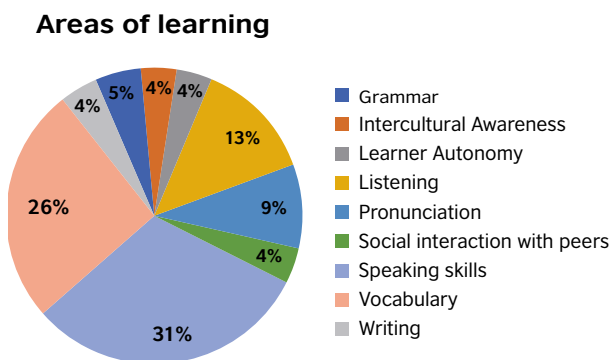
Eighty-four per cent of CTs interviewed agreed that remote teaching was an effective form of learning. One CT from Canelones teaching at a *Priority Attention* school said: “*Children learn. I even see it in the kids I work with that have no previous knowledge whatsoever ... they understand, learn and sing in English. I think that is the clearest evidence, children learn a lot.*”

When asked to specify in which areas this learning is most evident, 31 per cent of CTs mentioned speaking skills. One CT from a rural school in Artigas said: “*Even those students who are shy and rarely participate, when you ask them, they know and can*

answer in English. We were all afraid about this aspect of learning English. No one wants the class to laugh at their pronunciation but they feel comfortable.”

The second area where CTs find evidence of learning is in vocabulary development (26 per cent). A CT from Tacuarembó in her second year in the programme recognised that her “students started level 1 two months ago and we can see that they are using words in English, they know the colours and animals, in just two months.”

Other areas mentioned by CTs are summarised in the chart below:



This learning is not only evident in their command of the language, and CTs generally refer to students having a better attitude and increased motivation at school because of *Ceibal en Inglés*. One CT from Canelones in her fourth year in *Ceibal en Inglés* summarised her impressions: “When something happens and we have to reschedule the remote lesson, they keep on asking me: When are we going to have our English class? I think this shows they are really into it. They have become enthused by it.”

Do any other subject areas benefit from the children learning English?

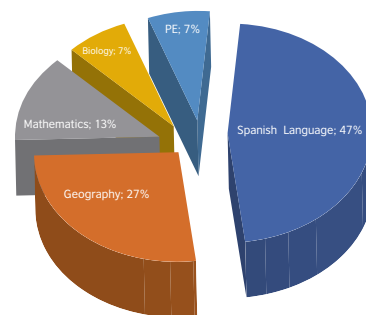
Participation in *Ceibal en Inglés* has had some additional outcomes; in the way it has allowed CTs and learners to make connections to other areas of the national curriculum. One-third of our interviewees identified specific areas that have been reinforced by remote teaching methodology and materials. A further third stated that there were benefits to other areas but did not mention specific examples at the time of the interview.

The subject area most commonly mentioned was Spanish. CTs referred to the use of contrastive analysis as a way of using their newly acquired English knowledge to emphasise areas in Spanish that students have trouble with. One CT from a rural school in Canelones said that “when we are working in Spanish, I ask my students: Do you remember when your RT talked about this, how was it in English? How is it in Spanish? We compare both grammatical systems and it works.”

Another CT, from Montevideo, explained that she had learned how to better present Spanish grammar through observing her RT: “The teacher uses a lot of tables and I see that students understand the points and remember, so it works. Therefore, I’ve incorporated this type of table to my Spanish lessons.”

The second most commonly mentioned area was Geography. The English materials included elements of CLIL (content and language integrated learning), especially in levels 2 and 3 (taught to grades 5 and 6), and Geography was one of the subject areas incorporated. This means that CTs can reinforce content concepts in lessons B and C and build bridges between the content of the English lessons and other curricular areas. One CT from Canelones mentioned an experience with learning about foreign countries: “The RT gave students characteristics of different countries as clues and students had to guess which country she was talking about. We had worked a lot with this type of information about countries, so it was a great way to reinforce and assess what we have learnt.”

Benefits to other curricular areas



Has participating in Ceibal en Inglés helped you develop as a teacher?

Forty-nine per cent of CTs reported that by engaging in *Ceibal en Inglés* they were able to develop and refine their teaching skills. In particular, two areas were mentioned: *classroom activities* (36 per cent) and *lesson planning* (28 per cent).

One CT from Montevideo in her third year in *Ceibal en Inglés* referred to the way RTs help students learn and practice vocabulary: “I realised that the way you work with vocabulary in English is much more effective and efficient. By using songs and games, children learn the vocabulary and are motivated.” A CT from San José said that “the visual input that always accompanies the new words allow students to anchor the meaning to the word. Then add the song with the words so students have two ways in which the new words are linked: the image and the sound.”

Some other aspects of the methodology of remote teaching have been adopted by CTs. One CT from Maldonado said she had learnt from the way the remote lessons are structured: “I now start my lessons presenting what we are going to work with and then at the end of

the lesson wrap up by reviewing what we have learnt today. It is a good way to deliver a lesson in any subject.”

Conclusions

Ceibal en Inglés was created because there are not enough English teachers in schools across Uruguay. It has introduced a new model of language teaching and learning in which some of the individuals in charge of putting it into practice are non-experts in the field. These individuals have to step out of their comfort zone and change from their traditional role to become an enabler and facilitator of learning rather than the expert in the classroom. CTs that have managed to successfully implement it have mentioned the positive impact this has had on their students, their learning and on themselves.

CTs highlighted the inclusive nature of remote teaching, since it allows students to access knowledge and skills they could not reach otherwise. Eighty-four per cent of CTs interviewed consider remote teaching as an effective way of teaching a foreign language in a variety of different contexts.

Remote teaching as implemented in Uruguay through *Ceibal en Inglés* has the potential to not only bring language instruction to contexts where it is normally not possible to do so, but also enhance other areas of the curriculum. The CTs' professional development has also benefited in the areas of lesson planning and classroom activity design. As such, remote teaching is proving to be not just a way to bring educational opportunities to those who otherwise have little opportunity to access English, but also an effective way to impact educational practices in other areas beyond those originally intended.

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7.1

From classroom teacher to English teacher

Silvia Rovegno

Classroom teacher Andrés Viera	Grade: 6
Escuela No. 5 Republica de Italia	Location: Tacuarembó
School type: Priority attention	

Andrés has fulfilled his childhood dream of learning English. His new goal is to become an English teacher in his school, which he now sees is within his grasp thanks to *Ceibal en Inglés*.



Photograph by Andrés Viera

Introduction

Andrés Viera is a teacher from Tacuarembó. His school has been participating in *Ceibal en Inglés* since 2015. The teachers in the school were the driving force for the arrival of the programme, although it took a year for the school to get the necessary infrastructure to be able to start. Andrés says the main reason why *Ceibal en Inglés* is successful in the school is that the team of classroom teachers is committed to the students' success in learning English. This commitment stems from their own life stories and goals.

Tacuarembó

Tacuarembó is in the northern part of Uruguay, 390 kilometres from Montevideo. The city has a population of about 95,000 people. Andrés says his home town has changed enormously in the last 30 years due to the establishment of new industries, development of the rice industry and the renewable energy sector. This has not only brought workers from other provinces to Tacuarembó, but also people from other countries, mainly Finland, Chile and India. This has meant that everyday life in the city has changed considerably and led to a more international atmosphere in the city.

Teaching English in Tacuarembó

Andrés says *Ceibal en Inglés* has had a great impact on the teaching of English in Tacuarembó, not only in the primary schools where it has been implemented, but also in other educational institutions. In the last couple of years many new private language

academies and institutes have opened their doors following the introduction of English in state primary schools, and some have even started advertising themselves as bilingual schools.

A window to the world

Andrés' students come from very underprivileged households, and he is happy they can now learn English and have the chance to be more open to the world. He told us that some of his students do not usually leave their neighborhoods, that they don't even know the main square of their city. The chance that *Ceibal en Inglés* gives the children goes beyond the learning of a language, allowing them to see the world and be in contact with other cultures via the screen, the content of the lessons and the remote teacher.

Andrés says: "Their remote teacher in one lesson, in which we were working on prepositions, took us on a virtual tour of the Smithsonian Museum and then of Buckingham Palace. It was simply amazing; the children couldn't believe those places existed and that there were words there in English they knew!"

Involving parents

This has not only had an impact on the students but also on the parents, who are beginning to realise the opportunities learning English brings in today's world. Some children do their homework at home using the school's WiFi connection, meaning parents are sometimes by their side and get to see the

materials the children have access to. “It’s a new world for them as well,” says Andrés. “Parents and children are learning together.”

Learning together with his students

It is not just parents that are learning with students, as the teachers also have the chance to learn English. As well as access to the British Council’s self-access course, *LearnEnglish Pathways*, the classroom teachers are learning English side by side with their students in the classroom.

Andrés says: “When we’re in other lessons, I’m Andrés the teacher, but when we are in the remote lesson I’m one of them and we’re equal. They see that in the remote lesson I have my notebook, I take notes, I ask questions, they see me involved in learning English and I think this helps them to see how valuable this experience is.”

Childhood dream of learning English

When Andrés was growing up there was only one place where people could learn English in Tacuarembó, and his parents could not afford to pay for lessons. His mother used to work at a street market and his father worked in the town hall as a clerk. It was a typical working class family, so learning English was a luxury they could not afford. Andrés has always wanted to learn English and, as a result of his experience in *Ceibal en Inglés*, he believes that he has ‘a knack for it’. Now at 40 years of age, he has the chance of fulfilling his childhood dream of learning English.

English has opened doors for Andrés

Andrés still cannot afford to attend private English lessons, so *LearnEnglish Pathways* has opened doors for him; not just the chance to learn English, but also the chance to meet colleagues from all over the country, who work in similar and different contexts, and their e-tutors. When he started with *Ceibal en Inglés*, he was taking a postgraduate course in *Autism* and all the materials he had were in English. Luckily, after he started *LearnEnglish Pathways*, working with the tutors and the course allowed him to read the *Autism* materials. “If it hadn’t been for this, I wouldn’t have been able to pass my specialist degree,” Andrés says.

Transforming the way he teaches other subjects

Andrés says the experience of English has changed the way he teaches other subjects. He has been able to identify that in English lessons, remote teachers work with a sequence of interrelated concepts, which gradually become more complex. This same structure of interrelated units is what he is now incorporating to the teaching of the curricular areas.

Also, the way he plans his lessons has changed as a result. He now looks for connections between different topics, which are essential for a successful acquisition of knowledge and skills. This is an unexpected benefit of *Ceibal en Inglés* and is something that Andrés says he didn’t do before.

Making steady progress

Andrés started at Elementary level and found it easy. He was happy to be getting scores of 80% or more. In the following level things became harder, with more complex grammar and vocabulary. He managed, however, to grasp the basic concepts. Recently, he completed Upper-intermediate, which he found hard, but it helped to go back and revise previous levels. He has a portfolio of every level where he keeps his study notes. He prints out all the course content because he finds it hard to read from the screen. Andrés is now studying the Upper-intermediate plus course and he feels confident now about the English he has learnt.

Finding time to learn English

Andrés says: “I work on my English course every day. I get up at five in the morning and from five to seven is English for me, or, if I can’t do it in the morning, I work in the evenings from seven to nine every single day. I feel quite comfortable when reading or listening to English. Speaking is still a bit difficult for me because I make a mess out of pronouns. The grammatical structure of English is completely different from Spanish, so it is as if your brain is upside down! It works in a different way. You cannot compare them because you won’t make sense when talking.”

Improvement in concentration

Learning English has also helped Andrés improve his concentration because he finds there are things that he needs to work hard on in order to learn, to exercise his strategies for memorisation, such as learning irregular verbs. He has noticed that ever since he started to learn English this way, his concentration in general has improved. Andrés has developed several metacognitive strategies to help him. As an example, he uses posters around his bedroom to reinforce learning of vocabulary.

Understanding authentic English

Andrés can now do something he has always wanted to do: read articles from online newspapers, such as the *New York Times*. He has always liked the articles in this newspaper and finds them excellent. In the past, he was not able to read them, but now he can understand and apply the ideas to his teaching. He can also stay in touch with the latest advances in educational research. Of course, there are things that he needs to translate, but he now has the skills to do so.

CEIBAL en Inglés

We hereby certify that

ANDRES VIERA VIÑAS

has successfully completed
LearnEnglish Pathways
Upper-Intermediate 2


Claudia Erovetto – Plan Ceibal


Graham Stanley – British Council
Montevideo, July 2018

Change in approach to teaching English

During the years working with *Ceibal en Inglés*, Andrés' approach to teaching lessons B and C has changed. The first year he worked with *Ceibal en Inglés*, he stuck quite rigidly to the plan as stated in the documents. Now that he has more confidence in his English skills and more experience of the *Ceibal en Inglés* programme, he is able to adapt the plans to the needs of his students. He now feels he can make suggestions to his RTs and during co-ordination they decide together how best to put the weekly cycle into practice. This flexibility wouldn't be possible, he says, if he hadn't improved his command of English. His students also see that English is not just something they have to learn, but is a tool to learn about the world, a tool to open their minds to new things.

What's next?

In answer to the question 'What is my goal?' Andrés says: "Well to be honest, my personal dream is to sit for the *Aptis* exam, pass it and then become an English teacher in my school. This is my personal goal. To teach English to my kids in my school. I love my school with all my heart and I wouldn't change it for the world. This is my dream, to become an English teacher in my school."



Photographs by Andrés Viera

8

Team teaching: making remote learning possible

Verónica Pintos and Silvia Rovegno

- Effective team teaching between the remote teacher (RT) and classroom teacher (CT) is the key to successful learning in *Ceibal en Inglés*
- When co-ordination fails, student learning and engagement is negatively affected
- 52 per cent of RT/CT teams use both synchronous and asynchronous modes when co-ordinating the weekly lesson cycle
- Co-ordination via email is preferred by 72 per cent of CTs

Introduction

There are many different approaches to team teaching. In *Ceibal en Inglés* two professionals from different educational backgrounds, with different levels in English expertise, come together to achieve a common goal. A primary education CT with little or no knowledge of English delivers two-thirds of a remote language teaching programme by following detailed lesson plans and the advice of the second professional, an English language RT who teaches one weekly lesson via videoconferencing from a different location. Weekly *co-ordination* between these two professionals stands out as being central to successful teamwork in *Ceibal en Inglés*. This chapter will report on the findings of extensive interviews with teachers involved on both sides of the screen and identify the characteristics of team teaching in *Ceibal en Inglés*, as well as the issues and challenges.

Team teaching

Team teaching defined

Wadkins, Wozniak, and Miller (2004:77) define team teaching as “an alternative approach to teaching that generally implies two or more instructors collaborating over the design and/or implementation of a course.” It can also mean “two or more instructors are present in the classroom at the same time” (Sluti et al., 2004:97–98) with both sharing “responsibility in the development, implementation

and evaluation of instruction to a group of students with diverse needs” (Welch et al., 1999:38). In the case of *Ceibal en Inglés*, this collaboration is done at a distance and is responsible for the implementation of a course designed to reach a wide population. Both professionals are present at the same time in the remote lesson, one physically present with the students and the RT virtually present through the use of high-quality videoconferencing equipment. During the other two lessons of the weekly cycle, only the CT is present and they facilitate learning by following a detailed lesson plan and through the support and guidance given by the RT. Both teachers are therefore responsible for the implementation of the course and the learning of the students.

Team teaching configurations

Four different models of team teaching have been identified (Wadkins et al., 2004; Welch et al., 1999; Cook and Friend, 1995):

- Tag-team teaching or turn teaching: This configuration involves at least two teachers taking turns to lead the different aspects of the lesson. These teachers do not necessarily share the classroom at the same time, i.e., each educator handles the course alone (Wadkins et al., 2004; Leavitt, 2006).
- Co-ordinator of multiple guest speakers: This model calls for one lead teacher sharing the responsibility for the course and inviting a guest speaker (Wadkins et al., 2004; Collins, 1996).
- Co-operative teaching: This term tends to describe teaching practices that involve two or more educators liaising to deliver instruction (Welch et al., 1999).
- Collaborative teaching or co-teaching: This approach to teaching implies “collaborative efforts in classroom settings” (Welch, et al., 1999:37) in which two or more professionals deliver “instruction to a diverse, or blended group of students in a single space” (Cook and Friend, 1995:156). For Cook and Friend (ibid), there are variations in practice of the co-teaching model and they identified the following patterns in this model:

- *Teacher/assistant*: Both teachers are present but one of them takes the leading role in the classroom as the other teacher observes the students and walks around the room, assisting the students.
- *Station teaching*: Instruction content is divided into segments and teachers “present the content at separate locations within the classroom” (p. 7).
- *Parallel teaching*: Both teachers prepare the lesson plans jointly, but each of them delivers classes to a “heterogeneous group consisting of half the class” (p. 8).
- *Alternative teaching*: In this case, one teacher leads a small group of special educational needs (SEN) students, while the other instructs the large group (p.8).
- *Hybrid team teaching*: This model is a combination of the models above (Wadkins et al., 2004).

In the case of *Ceibal en Inglés*, team teaching takes a hybrid form. It can be seen as a form of turn teaching with both professionals taking turns delivering a lesson within the weekly cycle. The RT teaches lesson A (remote lesson: language presentation) with the assistance of the CT and this professional facilitates lessons B and C (practice and consolidation lessons). At the same time, it constitutes a form of co-operative teaching in the sense that both professionals need each other in order to successfully facilitate their lessons. The RT needs the help and support of the CT to deliver lesson A while the CT needs the input and advice from the RT to make the most of lessons B and C.

Benefits of team teaching

Team teaching offers a number of benefits that increase not only the teachers’ professional development but also their efficacy in the classroom. Collins et al. (1996:108) identified that “multiple instructors brought a broader base of examples to the course.” Wadkins et al. (2004:79) explained that one of the benefits of team-teaching is having an array of teaching techniques, providing teachers with the possibility of implementing “a greater variety of perspectives, teaching techniques, and personal styles.” Sluti et al. (2004:81) added to this, stating that teachers “develop mutual trust and respect, learn to collaborate, and share teaching philosophies and methods” and students learn to self-reflect upon teachers’ practice because “if team teaching is done well, students will see instructors working interactively to achieve a common goal.” All things considered, team teaching “can help create a dynamic and interactive learning environment, and provide instructors with a useful way of modeling thinking within or across disciplines” (Leavitt, 2006:1).

Challenges to team teaching

Despite the benefits, team teaching is challenging for the individuals involved, given that teaching is generally a one-teacher job. Certainly, one key challenge lies in the two professionals establishing a successful working relationship. “Teamwork is not easy. Teammates often have unspoken agendas, which may not parallel the team’s” (Volchock, 2010:3). Taking a backseat while another individual takes charge of your class and your students might prove to be a difficult task for some teachers, as Leavitt (2006:3–4) reports: “putting yourself in a position where your own authority and expertise on a certain topic may have to take a backseat is not easy but it can be a rewarding and enhancing challenge for teachers.”

In the case of *Ceibal en Inglés*, we can identify other specific challenges these teams face. The fact that these two professionals have to establish a relationship of trust at a distance when sometimes they do not share the same culture or language can be demanding. This task requires the establishment of clear guidelines on the part of the programme designers and the adoption of new strategies by both teachers. The insistence on regular *co-ordination*, described below, is considered crucial to the success of team teaching.

Team teaching in Ceibal en Inglés

Lesson A (via videoconferencing) depends on the establishment of a successful working relationship between RT and CT. The CT ensures there is a suitable learning atmosphere on their side of the screen, organise seating arrangements, assists in nominating students to participate as well as monitor group dynamics. Meanwhile, in lessons B and C, following the lesson plans provided and supported by the co-ordination with the RT, CTs conduct 45-minute practice and recycling sessions with the students.

One element that makes team teaching in *Ceibal en Inglés* distinctive is the weekly *co-ordination* of lessons that takes place between the RT and the CT, following Leavitt’s (2006:1) advice that “team teaching requires different preparation than traditional, single-instructor courses, particularly concerning the organisational aspect of course management” and that for classroom management to be effective, there should be planning meetings that “allow instructors to familiarise themselves with their partner’s materials, helping make the class a true team effort from the start.”

In *Ceibal en Inglés* (2007:7) *co-ordination* is defined in the following way:

“This instance lasts about half an hour per week and consists of the sharing of the week’s plans by the two teachers. They have the plans in front of them and

discuss the best way to implement these taking into consideration the group's particular characteristics. It is very important that the RT guides the CT in issues related to second language learning, language-related questions, cultural issues, etc. It is also fundamental that the CT in particular tells the RT about the most appropriate class rhythm, interaction patterns for the particular group at hand."

Co-ordination in *Ceibal en Inglés* is considered essential to the success of the project and the teachers are paid for this co-ordination. It provides:

- an opportunity to test "the sort of dialogic instructions [the team members] present in class: (Leavitt, 2006:3);
- a space to reflect upon teachers' progress as a team;
- a time to discuss impressions of students' responses and engagement (ibid).

Research strategy

In order to learn about the team-teaching approach in *Ceibal en Inglés*, individual interviews, surveys and focus groups were carried out with RTs and CTs. British Council management involved in *Ceibal en Inglés*, were also interviewed. The objective of the interviews was to identify the strategies used to establish a successful working relationship between RTs and CTs and the modes and topics of co-ordination.

Findings

The findings are presented below, grouped by themes identified in the interviews.

The importance of co-ordination

Both RTs and CTs recognised the central role that teamwork plays in *Ceibal en Inglés*. One RT explained: "I emphasise with my CTs the idea of being a team and working on class dynamics. I cannot teach without them" One CT from Montevideo described the way she has co-ordinated with RTs along the years: "The RTs select what to do and ask for my opinion. I usually say if I think it is appropriate. We also agree on further materials to include; for example, last year one group got hooked on some videos about animals so the RT and I agreed to find other similar ones to cater for that motivation. This RT was extremely open and willing to listen. This is very important because we have a limited knowledge of English but we know the group and both types of knowledge are needed in order to work."

Co-ordination: modes of communication

The RT-CT communication modes vary according to the relationship the teams have built and the

workload the two professionals have. All RTs interviewed reported using two different modes of communication with CTs: email and instant messaging/Voice Over IP (VOIP) service for mobile phones (such as *WhatsApp*) were preferred.

- 72 per cent of CTs said they prefer email, given that they can review the information at their convenience. As one CT from Lavalaje explained: "I prefer emailing since I can read it carefully when I get home or when I have some free time at school. I am not restricted to a certain time. It is also a non-intrusive way of co-ordinating because we decide when to read the email and it's not like *WhatsApp* that is blinking on your mobile screen all the time."
- 52 per cent of CTs reported using at least two forms of communication while co-ordinating, the most common being email and *WhatsApp* (50 per cent). One CT from Montevideo explained her reasons for using a number of different modes of co-ordination: "You can check *WhatsApp* at any time, I check my mail once a day only or sometimes I don't, so if what we need to co-ordinate is urgent, like rescheduling or technical issues, we use *WhatsApp*. When we need to share information, such as students' background information that is long and detailed, then we use emails."
- CTs value their RTs' flexibility when it comes to co-ordination. One of the RTs explained that "some CTs that don't reply to my emails so I implemented other strategies; for example, I asked them for their cell phone numbers. I create a *WhatsApp* group if all CTs work at the same school I teach remotely, and we are in contact over *WhatsApp*"

Topics discussed during co-ordination

- 87 per cent of interviewed teachers reported discussing two or more topics in co-ordination.

The following have been found to be of high frequency and relevance in the RT-CT co-ordination meetings:

- 67 per cent of RTs share and obtain feedback on the plan for lesson A, including negotiating lesson plan content to consider individual student' and class characteristics.
- 62 per cent of RTs provide guidance on how to go about lessons B and C, including negotiating what content and activities from lessons B and C to focus on during the week.
- 42 per cent of CTs share information about the group and individual students. CTs share details about particular students with RTs, including, personal and family issues that might be affecting them. They also reported discussing students'

particular learning needs, and successful strategies CTs have implemented when teaching other subjects.

- 90 per cent of the RT believed that the learning needs to be flexible.

CTs mostly mentioned empathy as being one of the RT's most valuable skills, usually expressed as an ability "to put themselves in the CTs' shoes". The following example puts this in perspective:

"I lowered anxiety and I gave space for the CTs to communicate when they couldn't work with lessons B and C. For example, at the beginning of this year, some of them told me: 'Look, I'm getting to know the students, so I didn't have enough time to look at plans B and C'. Last year, I was so obsessed with this idea of going through the plan, the system, and everything had to be A, B and C. This year, it's different; I feel that I can give support. I can say: 'Look, don't worry. If you couldn't do the activity, we will practise it in the remote lesson'. In this way, I give a little bit more of comfort to ... perhaps CTs who are fresh starters ... because I have many junior CTs in fourth grade and they are so anxious ..."

Responses from both CTs and RTs indicated that establishing a strong bond between the two teachers leads to more effective teaching. One of the RTs stated that "the key is to have a good relationship with the CT, because if you don't have a good relationship with them, for the next lesson A they are not going to prepare anything." Co-ordination time not only helps this bond to be established but also encourages team decision-taking, as another RT reported: "The way we co-ordinate with the CTs is very important, because if you have a very good relationship with the CT, she will help you out with many other things in the remote lesson"

RTs have noted improved student performance in lesson A when successful co-ordination of the work to be done in lessons B and C is achieved. "If the students have practised the vocabulary in lessons B and C, as agreed in co-ordination, then it shows in lesson A. It shows because in lessons B and C, the CT reinforces what we teach in lesson A"

An experienced CT from Salto explained how the RTs support her work in these lessons: "To tell you the truth, we do not follow the plans of lessons B and C as stated. Last year I had a very weak group doing level 3, so the RT would send me adapted tasks from the plans or other activities on areas we felt students were having more difficulty with. It is important that the RT and the CT have that freedom of adapting the plans and activities to the characteristics of the group."

However, there are cases in which achieving a good working relationship is not possible, which means the learning process is affected. When co-ordination

does not take place, teaching the class remotely becomes difficult, as stated by one RT: "The relationship with this CT was frustrating. He didn't answer my emails. I didn't know whether he was going to school or not. And when I was delivering lesson A, I couldn't see him on the screen. Sometimes I spotted him at the back with his mobile phone, and at the beginning I tried asking him for help, but it was useless because he was doing his own thing."

When CTs do not take an active role in class, or co-ordination is lacking or not consistent, then this affects the performance and atmosphere of the class. One experienced RT recalled: "The group was not motivated because the CT didn't motivate them. I remember we were working with the (topic) 'neighbourhood', and they had to prepare posters on that. They had done something completely different from what I had asked ... that was frustrating"

It is clear, then, that both professionals are needed in order for the programme to be effective. One cannot work without the other because without an adult in the classroom with the students, the teaching of lesson A remotely would not be possible as children need to be supervised. Also, the content presented in lesson A by the RT subsequently needs to be practised in lessons B and C.

Challenges to team teaching at a distance

Team teaching in *Ceibal en Inglés*, is time consuming for RTs, particularly when they have a large number of classes: "I have 16 courses. Holding co-ordination meetings and having a good relationship with each of the 16 CTs was the most difficult challenge to deal with" (interview with RTs, 2017).

Overall, the majority of RTs reported having very positive working relationships with their CTs. RTs, with only ten per cent of CTs demonstrating unco-operative behaviour in lesson A. This ranged from "not being present in the class" to not being engaged and doing another activities, such as marking work, using a mobile phone or reading unrelated material. In these cases, RTs need to develop strategies to deal with this lack of involvement. The most common strategy reported was that of addressing the children directly so as not having to depend on the CT for basic classroom management. This led RTs to:

- Ask children to bring name tags so the RT could easily identify them
- Prepare classroom seating plans and ask children to keep the same seating arrangement for every lesson A
- Organise children into groups with a group leader to monitor the groups' activity and report to the RT upon completion of an activity

While both teachers are responsible for managing the remote lesson, the RT is responsible for the

successful delivery of lesson A and the CT provides as much help as necessary for the lesson to run smoothly.

Conclusions

Working in teams, in particular virtual teams – as is the case with *Ceibal en Inglés* – is “growing rapidly, driven primarily by the ability to gather workers seamlessly from disperse locations” (Dool, 2010:173). Bringing an English teacher into the classroom via videoconferencing offers what Dool (2010:173–4) describes as the opportunity “to tap into expertise, experience and capabilities” that would otherwise not be possible, and there is a need for the RT to be supported by the CT because primary children cannot be left alone. When the CT takes an active role in the English classes, then the effect of the teaching is boosted and more opportunities for learning are created.

Team teaching gives both *Ceibal en Inglés* teachers a unique opportunity to teach in a different way. This requires the RTs’ and CTs’ full engagement in the project since this will impact on the students’ learning outcomes.

While communication can be a challenge, when consensus is reached, everyone in the classroom benefits and remote teaching becomes a rewarding experience. In order for the most effective teaching and learning to take place, the CT must be physically present and active in the classroom during the remote lesson. This is also paramount to ensure adequate child protection measures are in place.

Effective team teaching in *Ceibal en Inglés*, therefore, requires RTs and CTs to liaise and share their expertise and experience, to show flexibility, and share duties and responsibilities for the benefit of the students in their primary school classrooms. Only when a clearly defined and shared approach to team teaching is adopted can this remote teaching project offer conditions required for successful student learning. In this form of team teaching, each member of the team will then also “improve the quality of their instruction while developing patience, tolerance, sensitivity and a spirit of co-operation” (Sluti, et al., 2004:97).

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8.1

Team teaching takes the stage

Silvia Rovegno and Verónica Pintos

Remote Teacher: Fabiana Mallón British Council Argentina Remote Teaching Centre	Grade: 6
Classroom Teacher: Juana Vázquez Escuela 2 José Pedro Varela	Location: Maldonado
School type: Urban	



Introduction

One of the key factors in the *Ceibal en Inglés* primary programme is the teamwork required from the Remote Teacher (RT) and the Classroom Teacher (CT). These two educators have very different backgrounds, the RT being a private sector English language teacher and the CT a public sector primary teacher without necessarily any knowledge of English teaching methodology, or, indeed, any knowledge of English. Because of this, there are barriers to overcome and challenges to face in order for successful teaching and learning to occur. Sometimes the challenge lies in overcoming barriers relating to language: some RTs speak little Spanish and most CTs speak little or no English. There may also be cultural differences when RTs are non-Uruguayans (i.e. when RTs are from Argentina, the Philippines or the UK).

In the context of this case study, Fabiana (RT) and Juana (CT) did not have to overcome language barriers as both speak Spanish as their mother tongue. They did, however, have to bridge the gap between Fabiana's background, coming as she does from the capital city of Argentina, whereas Juana lives in a small city in the east of Uruguay.

Teaching and learning context

The school is in the capital city of the third largest province in Uruguay, which has a population of 180,000 people. More than half of the people live in the area around the capital where the school is located. The school offers primary education from first to sixth grade to an average of 540 students. There are on average 25 students per class. The British Council Argentina Remote teaching Centre, in contrast, is in the centre of Buenos Aires. There are 30 *teaching points* (small classrooms), where the

remote teachers teach from, and more than 80 full-time or part-time remote teachers deliver 1,000 weekly lessons to Uruguayan schools.

Successful team teaching

Both Juana and Fabiana found that frequency and flexibility were the two key elements to make the coordination of lessons work. This implied finding a tool that would allow for this to happen. Both agreed that using the application *WhatsApp* on their mobile devices allowed them to achieve this.

Juana recalled “we usually communicated in the evening or whenever we felt we needed to share something. Fabiana is very hard-working so she is constantly telling me about what is to come in the programme or some material she found on the LMS, CREA2, or just to let me know something that she forgot to tell the kids during the remote lesson. You need that constant feedback between RT and CT. We are both hard-working and interested in making this work.”

In her two years as remote teacher, Fabiana has developed a consistent and systematic approach to coordination with her CTs based on experience. She explained this approach “Once the class is finished, I send them the plan with a comment on the class recently taught, I try to make it as personalised as I can, such as commenting on a specific occurrence during the lesson or praising one or all students for their progress, then I guide my CTs on how to deal with lessons B & C prioritizing those exercises which are important to be completed and the learning outcome students must copy in their notebooks. Above all, I thank the CT for her collaboration and participation in the class. I let her know about the

following class topic and about specific seating arrangements, if necessary, or to organize flashcards or other material if needed.”

Last, but not least, Fabiana asks her CTs how they feel the class went. Their opinion is important not only because she wants feedback on the recent but because Fabiana wants to involve the CT in the planning lessons and projects.

Knowledge sharing

The RT is not only the one that needs to provide information. CTs have to help RTs bridge the gap between the teaching point and the classroom, and to become acquainted with the context of the school and the students in the class.

Fabiana reflected upon the information that is essential for RTs to have:

“I try to have as much information as I can from my students, including their background, and to know if there are students with special educational needs, if some of the students are undergoing any type of challenging situation at their homes, but also from the group as a whole. As regards the school, I ask the CTs where it is located and if they can fill me in about the general context since it is important not to take anything for granted. I also ask them about any specific project the school has in mind so I can think of any way to integrate it into my teaching”.

Introducing Shakespeare

Certainly, team teaching implies a great effort and a change in the role of both professionals, but how do we go from this to putting together a Shakespeare play with sixth grade students who are 500 kilometres away?

Fabiana recalled the idea came to her as a way to reach a difficult group she had:

“To be honest, a CT from another school was having a hard time working with lessons B & C due to her students’ lack of motivation and came up with the brilliant idea of showing an excerpt of Macbeth on YouTube to her students during those lessons. Her idea was to convince them of how important it was to learn English. So, I said to myself: What if I try a different approach? What if I offer all my 6th grade students the possibility of performing a play? Then I showed them some short-animated versions of Shakespeare plays offered by the British Council at <https://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org>: Macbeth, Hamlet, Romeo and Juliet and A Midnight summer’s dream. I was sure drama would bring benefits to my students such as allowing them to freely express their emotions, help them with problem-solving and developing their imagination, taking greater responsibility, helping their friends, and all in a safe

and supportive learning environment. Fortunately, Juana thought it was a great idea!”

A joint project

When Fabiana presented the idea to Juana, she embraced it and made it her own project as well. Juana remembered their first conversations on the idea *“I was working on biographies of important historical figures with the children and I saw the chance to write or put together a play with suitable staging, music etc. So, when Fabiana suggested doing a play by Shakespeare, I jumped at the chance! But I told her I could do it only if she helped me! And she said of course, I help you put together the script, rehearse and this is how it started over one of our conversations over WhatsApp.”*

The students at first were very reluctant to do it. Fabiana recalled how Juana’s intervention and encouragement made it possible. Support of their parents was also essential to turn this idea into a reality. Fabiana explained how they dealt with this: *“Parents were invited to a remote meeting where the whole project was explained. They liked the idea and got involved in concrete ways such as supporting the play, helping with costumes and the snack that was served once the play finished.”*

Putting a play together remotely

Making it happen required extensive team work, collaboration and mutual support. Fabiana and Juana approached the preparation in a systematic and consistent way. Fabiana told us about the first steps: *“First of all, we made a decision about the specific play (Romeo and Juliet) to be performed. Then I wrote an adapted version of the play, taking into account their level of English”.*

Juana recalled these first days as well: *“Fabiana was always there, saying ‘Juana I sent you the script, did you get it? Could you read it?’ I read it and the following day I handed it out to students. We had seen the movie adaptation in Spanish so they knew the plot and the famous lines.”*

Rehearsing remotely with the aid of technology

Rehearsing a play remotely proved to be quite an experience. Early on, they came to the realization that they would need two students to support them: *“We realised that we would need one or two directors and decided that the best course of action would be to nominate two strong students for that. We rehearsed over a period of two months, once a week remotely and once a week face-to-face.”*

Juana organised a workshop where students got arty making their own masks they would wear in the play. Finally they painted Shakespeare’s portraits which were exhibited

on a special board on the day of the play. Fabiana worked in CREA2 with the biography of Shakespeare, analysed the characters with the newly learned vocabulary and structures. The LMS played an important role in the preparation of the play.

Fabiana told us: *“As students were struggling with pronunciation, I made them write their own lines on CREA2 and I uploaded a recording for each of the students to listen to using Vocaroo.com.”*

The final rehearsal took place in front of the whole school. Juana explained that this was a chance for them to improve on the final details of their performance, to spot any mistakes. All attendees loved this preview, filmed it and took lots of pictures. She recalled that *“everyone told us it was great!”* Everything was ready; it was time to take the play to the stage.

Presenting the play and meeting their RT in person

A week before the staging of the play, Fabiana sent a personal invitation to the school head which was replicated to the whole school community, parents included. *“Nobody missed it, the head, secretaries, teachers, students from other grades, grandparents, parents, siblings, the Ceibal en Inglés management, mentor, and quality manager, attended the performance”* Fabiana told us.

Fabiana even travelled from Buenos Aires to attend the play in person. Juana clearly remembered the students' excitement of meeting their remote teacher in person: *“It was so exciting; they were truly thrilled to have her there. You create such a strong bond remotely but having her there in the flesh was so different, it was a very emotional moment for us all.”* Fabiana also recalled this exciting moment: *“Students could not believe their eyes when they saw me appearing in their classroom. Some of them approached me and hugged me, some others looked for my help with their lines, and some showed me their costumes with pride.”*

The play took place in the school backyard, transformed to resemble Shakespeare's setting of Verona with its balcony, thanks to the dedication of the CT and the students.

Lessons learned

Undoubtedly, this experience was a memorable event for all those involved, the authorities, the parents and families, the school community but above all for Juana, Fabiana and her students. It was the clear outcome of a team working together, a CT and RT focused on achieving a common goal. For both this was not achieved easily. It required hard work, commitment and mutual respect.

Juana acknowledged this: *“The RT is a colleague like any other colleague we work with at the school and my role is to help her bridge the gap of physical distance.”* Fabiana added that in order to establish a successful RT-CT team there are certain conditions to be met: *“an open mind, patience, respect, trust, consistency, and understanding”*.

Fabiana concluded *“Successful coordination between RT and CT can transform the classroom into a safe place where learning is achieved by motivated students who are eager to take risks, participate, interact and communicate in the target language”*

9

Teacher mentoring in the context of *Ceibal en Inglés*

Gabriela Kaplan and Gabriela Rodríguez

- *Ceibal en Inglés* mentors are qualified, experienced teachers of English
- Eighteen mentors work across Uruguay, with each mentor working with approximately 40 schools
- The main role of the mentor in *Ceibal en Inglés* is to support and empower the work of the classroom teacher

This chapter will examine the nature and challenges of mentoring in *Ceibal en Inglés*. In order to fulfil this aim, firstly the theoretical grounds upon which we conceive mentoring in the context of *Ceibal en Inglés* will be explored; then secondly a more practical view of the mentors' task will focus on how mentors participate in *Plan Ceibal's* different educational programmes. In the field, mentors witness many Uruguayan primary classroom teachers (CTs) experience the shock of having to teach English, then slowly find their comfort zone as they gain confidence and feel a greater sense of empowerment. In secondary and vocational schools, mentors are building knowledge of what happens to classroom teachers of English (CTEs) as they take their first steps in collaborative teaching, focusing on raising intercultural awareness in their classrooms.

Teacher mentoring

It has been noted by many including Taylor and Stephenson (1996), Bailey (2006) and Malderez (2009) that the term 'mentor' can mean different things to different people. Malderez goes on, however, to state that the mentors in English language teaching (ELT) "work one-to-one, usually in the mentee's workplace, and are full and current members of the language teacher community the mentee is joining." This is the case in *Ceibal en Inglés*, with good mentoring occurring "when there is a mix of acquiring knowledge, applying it through practice, and critically reflecting on the process" (Zachary, 2009).

The need for mentors in *Ceibal en Inglés*

In the videoconferencing primary lesson (*lesson A*) CTs are asked to interact with the remote teacher

(RT) of English in an active and co-ordinated pedagogical team, while also learning English together with the children. In turn, the two follow-up practice lessons (*lessons B and C*), when the RT is not present and the CT is in charge, constitute a challenge for CTs, most of whom do not speak much English. This pedagogical context means CTs have a role that is very different from those found in traditional teaching. This is where the mentor steps in, to help the CTs with their new responsibilities.

First steps

With the implementation of *Ceibal en Inglés* in 2012, it became clear that successful teaching would depend greatly on the training given to RTs and on sufficient support given to CTs. CTs would need to incorporate this new dimension into their teaching practice with confidence and solidity. From this emerged the necessity of building a team of mentors, mainly teachers of English, who could work side by side with the CTs.

As Jenkins (2001) stresses, these mentors were not expected to be "expert knowers", more that they should strive to create a climate where "it is safe ... to learn and bare real views, ideas, beliefs, and also ... errors and problems." *Ceibal en Inglés* mentors were fellow teachers, albeit with a different pedagogical background, supporting CTs in their new role of accepting the challenge of leading lessons B and C in a field (ELT) for which they were never explicitly prepared. It should be stated here that the expectation is not to turn a Uruguayan primary classroom teacher into a teacher of English, but to empower the CTs and give them confidence to embrace the challenge of teaching what they do not necessarily know.

The role of the mentor

The idea of introducing a mentor to support CTs with their new role took some getting used to. It was not common for CTs working in the public system to receive external visitors in their schools and classroom. When external visitors do come, it is often because the CTs are going to be evaluated. The idea of a visitor arriving, whose aim was solely

to offer assistance when necessary and to serve as a colleague with whom to discuss opportunities and challenges was new to the system, and an unusual concept. An agreement between *Administración Nacional de Educación Pública* (ANEP), the public school administration and *Plan Ceibal* enabled mentors to visit schools and observe lessons, as well as to hold interviews with CTs and school leaders. It is for this reason that mentors not only support CTs, but they have also become the voice of the CTs, who turn to mentors not only for guidance in teaching a foreign language, but also for issues related to their professional relationship with RTs, the process of assuming their new role, and to help empower them in the language classroom.

Empowering the classroom teachers

The following statements about teachers' knowledge (Malderez and Wedell, 2007) proved useful in order for mentors to understand that the first step towards empowerment lies in CTs being aware of all the knowledge they possess:

Teachers **know about** (KA):

- their subject, their aims and the role of the wider curriculum
- how the subject is learnt, the existence of strategies to support learning
- the school and its policies, accepted norms and procedures within the education system
- the students, their backgrounds, their needs
- strategies for managing their own ongoing professional learning, the existence of professional organisations and support networks, and journals in their subject area.

Teachers **know how** (KH) to:

- use strategies to support pupils and their own learning
- notice important features in classroom and organisations
- promote conditions which support the learning process
- assess learning
- relate to students, other professionals, parents and colleagues
- fulfil other professional obligations
- assess and use new ideas and/or theories to think, plan and/or assess.

Ideally, teachers develop expertise to allow them to know to (KT):

- intuitively and instantaneously use what they know (whether it is a knowing about or knowing how type of knowledge) at just the right moment, and in just the right way to support the learning of their particular learners, in their classroom.

(Malderez and Wedell, 2007:19)

The challenge classroom teachers face

Most CTs do not speak any English and have not been formally introduced to the specifics of the learning process of a second or foreign language. Many CTs find this daunting and they have expressed their discomfort. It causes some to refuse to engage with lessons B and C of the weekly cycle. The greatest challenge for CTs in *Ceibal en Inglés*, therefore, is that they do not know what teachers traditionally "know about" (Malderez and Wedell, 2007).

Mentors can help CTs identify the other relevant knowledge and skills they possess that can be conducive to their students' learning. It is, therefore, the mentor's main mission to help CTs understand that their key role in the students' learning process is based on the knowledge they already have as professionals in education and teachers of the group; and what is needed is for them, with the aid of the mentors, to implement teaching strategies that are not based on direct delivery of content, but instead focus on facilitating learning and practising language.

Guiding CTs and helping them reflect on their new role

Mentors help CTs to reflect upon their practice and to find new ways to enable their students to learn and communicate. Mentors observe some of the CTs' lessons and/or have meetings with CTs in order to go deeper into this reflexive process and to share with them strategies they have seen other teachers implement.

While some teachers are more inclined to take the risk, in other cases mentors find CTs who question the implementation of the programme, who see this as an imposition and who put forward arguments that refer to their lack of previous training and to a tendency to overload teachers with more and more functions and roles.

The mentors' task can therefore be challenging, and implies a capacity to listen attentively. The mentor must gain the trust of CTs and persuade them that the mentor is ready to engage in a horizontal dialogue. CTs must trust their mentors, while mentors need to empathise with CTs, try to understand their needs and

see the reasons for any frustration. Since the success of the project relies on a strong CT–RT pedagogical team, mentors must also work with CTs to find strategies to foster positive rapport between RT and CT.

Mentors in the field

Currently, *Ceibal en Inglés* has a team of 18 mentors distributed across the country. Because approximately half of the country's population and schools are located in the capital city and its metropolitan area, half of the team is based in Montevideo, in the southernmost region of the country. Each of these southern mentors works with a number of schools from the capital's conurbation and also with the schools from another southern province. On average, a mentor works with 40 schools. This means they must travel often and organise a complex schedule of visits in order to follow up on all of their schools. Meanwhile, in the north there is a mentor in each province. They work with all the schools in their *department*. This also involves traveling to rural areas and remote locations in the least populated areas of the country.

Plan Ceibal operates as a highly dynamic institution, and is currently at a stage of building coherence and unity, bringing together under the same methodological framework a variety of programmes and projects, so that there is a common approach rather than a pool of separate projects. This is done under the banner of the New Pedagogies for Deep Learning (NPDL) Alliance (Fullan, M and Langworthy, M, 2013, 2014), which has served as a common ground and an educational horizon for all of these programmes. Previously, these teams, which had highly specific educational aims and methodological approaches, co-existed but worked independently from each other, even in schools where several programmes were involved at the same time. Now, however, programmes such as Robotics, Young Programmers, Computational Thinking and others share the same methodological framework of NPDL.

In addition, four different *Plan Ceibal* field teams have started co-ordinating their operations in order to provide a more consistent response to the needs of the educational communities they work with. This has required a lot of effort on the part of all the teams involved and great steps have been taken in 2017. For *Ceibal en Inglés* mentors, this has meant that new arenas have begun to be explored while co-ordinating with members of other field teams. Mentors have started participating in local meetings with school system authorities and other stakeholders; they have also started thinking of new pedagogies, new forms of assessment and new educational uses of technological aids in the context of NPDL. This helps mentors understand the bigger picture and will add value to *Ceibal en Inglés* inside the schools and classrooms. In some schools, besides the specifics of the development of their English courses, they must pay attention to their institutional aims and annual projects and to their involvement with the NPDL network and approach.

Mentors in secondary and vocational education

Furthermore, mentors have gradually become more involved in the *Conversation Class* programme that *Ceibal en Inglés* offers for secondary and technical schools. This differs from the primary English programme in that there is an English teacher present in the classroom, and a remote teacher visits weekly to practise speaking skills and to add an intercultural element. Because of this, RTs are usually native speakers of English, and they work closely with the CTE, who leads the lessons, unlike the remote primary English lessons, which are directed by the RTs.

Mentors provide support, when requested by the CTEs, to help resolve issues that can range from the technical to the pedagogical. The latter refer mostly to the challenges involved in collaborative teaching and development of intercultural skills.

Teacher training by mentors

Mentors have also started a series of workshops with trainee teachers in teacher training institutes across the country. This means that new generations of newly qualified teachers will now have some prior experience of the programme, and will have had some contact with mentors and other CTs who have groups in *Ceibal en Inglés*.

Although the mentors' main mission is still to work with CTs who participate in *Ceibal en Inglés* in the primary classroom, they have become a team that holds a much richer perspective on what the programme can offer to the education system as a whole. Mentors have gained a comprehensive, more panoramic view of *Ceibal en Inglés* and *Plan Ceibal*, and this has empowered them.

Mentoring teachers

Mentors have implemented a number of strategies to support CTs. It is fundamental for the mentor to be seen to be easily contactable and available when the CT needs to speak. CTs have meetings with their mentors at their school and the mentor sometimes arranges to observe a lesson, which could be a lesson A, B or C. Meeting groups of CTs at the same school is favoured, as this promotes the sharing of good practice and provides an opportunity to air their hopes and fears about being part of *Ceibal en Inglés*, leading to a sense of relief and community building.

One of the aims of the mentoring team is to create a community of teachers and have a shared space where CTs can socialise and share their experiences. With this in mind, mentors have opened online groups with their teachers in the Learning Management System (LMS). Mentors also encourage CTs to take part in academic events, to explore their practice and share their knowledge and reflections on their new role.

Ceibal Encuentro

In order to facilitate community building across *Ceibal en Inglés*, *Plan Ceibal* launched a biannual meeting (*Ceibal Encuentro*) in 2016 entitled Close Encounters of the Remote Kind in the Creation of an Educational Community, in which CTs from different contexts and regions participated and presented papers and posters alone or in groups. Many worked with their RTs or mentors, collaborating in this way for the first time.

The role of feedback

Giving feedback also has a vital role in the *Ceibal en Inglés* mentoring process. Mentors are encouraged to give constructive feedback, praising good practice and suggesting alternatives rather than telling CTs what they should do. Feedback is given during face-to-face meetings, as this gives mentors the chance to build rapport with their mentees. As it is important to go beyond discourse in order to identify the heart of the matter, mentors need to listen carefully to CTs before giving feedback.

Mentors use questioning in order to promote self-reflection in CTs. The first question a mentor asks is *How are you feeling?* This simple question invites the CT to reveal their attitude. How a CT feels will also affect the students' motivation in the classroom. Other questions asked include those focused on co-ordination and communication between the pedagogical team, such as:

- How do you keep in touch with your remote teacher?
- Is your remote teacher responsive to your questions and suggestions?
- Does co-ordination help you to lead lessons B and C?
- Do you feel you are part of a pedagogical team?
- How are you dealing with this new role?
- Has it been difficult to lead a lesson outside your subject matter?
- How do you feel about learning alongside your students?
- What strategies do you use when faced with a question you do not know the answer to?

These questions help CTs put into words what is happening, and thus gain perspective and reflect on their practices. Mentor feedback focuses on positively reinforcing good practice, to help CTs improve, and with an eye to empowering them in their new role. The questions aim to give CTs the opportunity to take control of their own professional development, and they can also

provide suggestions and boost CT confidence. Some examples of these are:

- How do your students learn best?
- What do you think about using flashcards/peripheral learning?
- How do students respond to games and contests?
- Why don't you open a discussion on the platform for students to ask questions to the remote teacher?

Mentors also share ideas they have gathered from other schools and CTs, or find ways to put teachers in contact so that they can exchange tips and experiences.

Conclusion

Ceibal en Inglés mentoring is designed to be a flexible process that can be adapted to different situations. It is a process built between mentor and CT and aims to foster autonomy and help widen the CT's horizons. By paving the way towards CT empowerment and showing that good teachers teach above and beyond a subject matter, mentors at *Ceibal en Inglés* also help establish a wider learning community. Visits, observations, meetings, conversations and attitudes all clearly demonstrate that CTs have been able to expand their comfort zones and build their didactic and pedagogical capacities to help their students learn a foreign language, attesting that CTs are still the central actors in education in Uruguay.

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9.1

The school, the community and the *Ceibal en Inglés* mentor

Graham Stanley

Mentor: Ana Gari	Started: 2013
Plan Ceibal	Location: Paysandú, Uruguay

Introduction

Ana Gari has been an English teacher since she was 20 years old, although she originally studied to be a social worker. She was attracted to the role of mentor for *Ceibal en Inglés* because “*I could combine my background as a social worker with being an English teacher and also start doing something for public education, to help improve the quality of Education in my country.*”

The role of the mentor

Ceibal en Inglés mentors are experienced English teachers who regularly visit the primary schools taking part in the programme to ensure the Uruguayan classroom teachers (CTs) understand how to follow the lesson plans; how best to use the flash cards; make good use of *Crea*, the LMS (Learning Management System) The mentors are the main point of contact between *Plan Ceibal* and head teachers. They observe classes and see how lesson plans and materials work in practice, often providing valuable feedback on what might need changing.

The mentors particularly support CTs with *classes B and C*, the two follow-on practice lessons that the CTs conduct on their own after the videoconference *class A* taught by a remote teacher (RT). Ana said it was important for the mentor to “*guide and empower classroom teachers, to make sure they were doing the lessons and fulfilling the role expected of them.*”

Distribution of mentors

There are a total of 20 *Ceibal en Inglés* mentors distributed across the country, with one mentor covering the schools in one or two Departments, depending on the number of schools and the geographical area. Ana is responsible for looking after 300 CTs in 40 schools, mainly in Paysandú, but



Photographs by Ana Gari

she also visits rural schools and those in small towns nearby, which may be up to 90 km away.

Ana sees a big difference between the children in schools in Paysandú, Fray Bentos and Young, and those in small towns where *Ceibal en Inglés* having very different characteristics: “*It’s very special the way they see English because they really don’t have another opportunity to study English.*”

Deciding who to visit

Being responsible for 300 CTs has its challenges. Ana makes a point of visiting new CTs at the beginning of the year, and contacts the others via email, letting them know she is there to support them if they need her. Communication is key and she tries to respond quickly, particularly if a CT contacts her with a problem.

Support with lessons B and C

Ana also visits those CTs who “tend not to do lessons B and C.”

Since becoming a mentor, she has developed strategies to deal with CTs who do not find the time to carry out the follow-up to the RT’s videoconferencing lesson. She believes the influence of the head teacher is very important in these cases: *“The head teachers have understood this is something they all need to do and I think they understand that the role is to promote this and to help the classroom teachers to make sure they go to lesson A and the do lessons B and C.”*

School inspectors

Another aspect of Ana’s role is her relationship with local school inspectors, who can also be influential in persuading CTs to participate in *Ceibal en Inglés*. An inspector, for example, may be persuaded to agree to a CT’s suggestion to only do one follow-up lesson, instead of both classes B and C. In this circumstance, Ana will speak to the inspector to explain *“why we have lessons three times a week: it’s important, it’s a process, and they need time.”* Ana happily says that this strategy usually works.

English changing the community

Ana is particularly pleased to see positive changes in schools, neighbourhoods and in the wider community because of the English lessons. She talked about one school where the socio-economic background was very challenging. The head teacher had told Ana that in the neighbourhood “there are only two parents that have a job, one in a petrol station and the other is working cleaning a house.”

The school started English during the pilot phase of the programme in 2012, and “at the beginning they called me all the time ... for everything, they needed support” and “I went to a class and there was always a fight or it was very messy ... very disruptive.” The children did not see the point of the lessons and



“many said, ‘I don’t care about English’ and 45 minutes was a lot for them.”

Proud of their achievement

Now, however, the school has “*become more confident and empowered, and they can solve situations on their own*” and “*this year everybody goes to the class, and they’re all happy.*” This progress was slow, but Ana can pinpoint the moment things changed.

The turning point came when one of the classes at the school took Cambridge Young Learner examinations “*and it was very interesting because they were really proud ... and the parents were crying when they got their certificates.*” Ana saw that they “*witnessed they could achieve something special*” that previously they had felt “*was just for other types of schools where children could afford to have private lessons.*”

Understanding the relevance of English

The achievement of this class was “*motivating for the others*” and provided a needed boost for the school as a whole. Since then, Ana says: “*I think they have improved a lot ... I think they see the value of learning English ... they can search for things on the internet, identify words in English when they play games or when they listen to music, and they can see they can understand more.*”

The influence could be felt in the community as a whole: “*They all go to English class. They all want to go and many of the ones that are in Year 4, for example, they have brothers and sisters who have been in the programme before, so they know that it’s important. And many of the brothers and sisters are doing high school now and they see how important it is for them in high school, because before it was a shock for them when they went to high school with no knowledge of English at all.*”

The influence of English on the curriculum as a whole

Ana has also seen how learning English in this way has helped with other subjects: “*I think it can broaden students’ vocabulary and knowledge because they have to talk about topics in English lessons that make them incorporate new vocabulary in Spanish. For instance, talking about volcanoes, things that they didn’t know in Spanish. And also, for language in general. They say, ‘is this a verb?’ ‘Is this an adjective?’ ‘What is an adjective?’ They realise that in Spanish we also have them.*”

A window to the world

Apart from English, in the more isolated towns and villages, Ana says the videoconferencing (VC)

equipment acts like a “window to the world” and allows communication with other schools in the country: *“You see it in how the students feel about the equipment. The way they care about the computers, the VC room, they really value it.”*

New directions for mentors

Ana has also started supporting secondary and vocational remote English teaching, where teachers have different challenges: *“In general, they contact us with problems with Crea: ‘I couldn’t upload this,’ or ‘How do I help my students with the homework?’ If they have to record audio and upload it, they generally have problems which I can help them with. We have also supported teachers with adapting lesson plans and materials.”*

Contact with the other mentors

Once a month, *Plan Ceibal* holds a one-day meeting in Montevideo for mentors. Ana feels this is very helpful, as *“generally, we have similar situations, similar problems, we share a lot, such as ideas on how to deal with certain situations.”* The team of mentors also has a *WhatsApp* group, *“so we are constantly sharing things that happen to us and we discuss ideas and find solutions together.”*

What does the future hold?

Ana knows there is still a lot of work to be done but is encouraged by the progress made since she first started in *Ceibal en Inglés*: *“It’s real and it’s happening, so that is very motivating. I have seen the progress, from just motivating one teacher and supporting her and then being able to motivate the head teachers, inspectors, getting the programme working in the community. This is very important as well as challenging, of course.”*

She enjoys the challenge of being a mentor and is motivated when she sees with her own eyes how the children are improving: *“The quality of the lessons is very, very good and you can see that in the pronunciation of the students and how they improve. Some make great progress in three years and improve a lot. That is very motivating, seeing how things work, how it can spread out in so many schools.”*

10

Remote English teaching to rural schools

Silvia Rovegno

Remote Teachers: Irene Vilas and Estela Quintana	Grade: 4, 5 and 6
British Council Remote Teaching Centre, Montevideo	Location: Across Uruguay
School type: Rural	

Rural schools in Uruguay provide primary education to children in isolated rural areas, covering six per cent of the total number of students in the country. In 2016, remote teachers Irene and Estela took part in a pilot scheme to bring English language lessons to students in two isolated schools. Because of the lack of fibreoptic lines in these areas, English lessons were delivered from Montevideo and Buenos Aires using an alternative technological solution to the usual videoconferencing of *Ceibal en Inglés*.

Introduction

The two schools that Irene and Estela taught into were quite different. One was located in the north of the country while the other was in the south. In one school, the classroom teachers had fought hard to obtain English lessons, while in the other the director and teacher were reluctant for fear that it could prove to be overwhelming for students. In both cases, their evaluation of the introduction of remote English was that it had been a very positive experience for the students and for them personally.

“The Classroom teacher at this school had already started working with the Ceibal en Inglés material with the children, so when we started teaching there were many things that the students already knew. Both classroom teacher and students were very enthusiastic about the possibility of having English lessons remotely,” Estela recalled.

Context

There are over 1,000 rural schools across Uruguay. Most of these have just one teacher who works with all students covering all required levels in primary education. These schools have fewer students as well, with over 300 having less than ten students each. According to the Uruguayan Public Education Authority (ANEP), the overall ratio of students per teacher in

rural schools is ten students per teacher. Students normally attend lessons from 9am to 2pm or 3pm, and have lunch at the school as well. There are six rural boarding schools in the country.

Estela experienced this during her remote lessons: *“There were fewer students than in a regular class, between 12 to 15 students. The school is their second home and family for real. You could feel they are a close-knit community, they are all together all the time, share the same room and the same teacher. They behave like a family; they take care of each other, show each other the new things they have learnt.”*

Beside the regular primary education subjects such as Mathematics, Literacy, Science and Social Sciences, students and teachers do activities related to their environment, such as taking care of the school orchard and animals. Learning a foreign language is certainly a new experience for them all, especially learning English in such an innovative way. Irene reflected upon this: *“They rarely have other activities apart from school and helping at home. And then English learning came to their school in this different way. They saw it as an opportunity to learn something new, something that they cannot learn in any other way, and both teachers and students embraced this opportunity fully.”*

The students

Over 17,000 students attend rural schools in the country. In most cases, students have to travel ten or 15 kilometres each way daily. Some are taken there by parents on motorbike or horseback, some walk; very few have the option of a school bus. Most of the students help at home or on the farm once they get back home from school. This was something different for Estela, who had to adjust to this fact; she recalls that setting homework was impossible: *“They studied and worked with the classroom teacher at school but not at home. Maybe because they did not have enough time; they spent from 9am to 2pm at school and then the time to go back home could be quite significant. Once there they needed to help out so there was not much time available for doing homework.”*

Having students of different ages in the same class was not new for these English teachers. What was challenging in this case was the suitability of the materials. All students were taking level one since it

was their first experience of learning English. The materials at this level are designed specifically to meet the cognitive needs and interests of students aged nine or ten. *“I was worried that older students might find the materials a bit childish and get bored, but they were so eager to learn that they didn’t show any discomfort on this matter,”* Irene recalled.

Estela also found dealing with unexpected situations a bit of a challenge: *“I had fourth, fifth and sixth forms together in one group because they were all doing level one. But one day, the other classroom teacher was absent so I had the whole school in one lesson. I had from first form to sixth; it was a bit of a mess, but we all had fun and enjoyed it. Sometimes I could see the faces of the little ones popping up on the screen and when they came over to my class they knew all the colours and numbers! Because they heard us working in class next door!”*

Bonding with students was a smooth process. As with any remote class, the teachers used ways to relate to them that are different from the strategies used in face-to-face lessons. In this case, Irene and Estela were not familiar with the students’ environment or background as they were with those in urban schools. *“The bond comes from our attitude, not from the camera or the technology; they saw that we cared about them, we wanted to learn about their lives and school,”* Irene said. Estela had the chance to visit one of her rural schools and spent a day there, sharing activities, games and lunch with her remote students. She recalled the experience: *“When I got the chance to visit them, we spent the whole day together playing, we had lunch. It was as if I had always been there. When they saw me, they said: ‘Wow you are real! You have legs!’”*

Irene’s experience was equally enriching: *“Students participated more than in other schools. They were engaged and they wanted to speak all the time. They showed no difficulties in learning remotely.”*

Similarities and differences with other remote lessons in *Ceibal en Inglés*

The main difference between these lessons and any regular *Ceibal en Inglés* lesson was the technology used to bring the lessons to the schools. The remote teachers taught from their usual Ceibal videoconferencing (VC) equipment, but at the school end a regular laptop computer was used with software that enabled connection to the VC equipment. This meant that the remote teachers needed to adjust the tools they regularly used in their remote lessons according to the limitations of this technology. Irene highlighted some of the main differences: *“The students saw us on a 17-inch laptop screen. We couldn’t make use of the camera as we do with the moveable ones in the regular lessons, or zoom in and out when I wanted to work closely with certain students. The classroom teacher had to move the*

computer to the students who had to stand up and move closer to the camera when we were working more closely.”

The internet connection in these schools was not fibreoptic as in the urban schools. Alternative solutions such as a satellite or 3G connection affect the quality and speed of connectivity. This created some problems when it came to sharing videos and audio, which needed to be played by the local classroom teacher on a separate device rather than via the remote teacher’s screen. However, these difficulties did not curb the students’ enthusiasm for learning. Estela told us that *“all these problems did not matter for them; they were very much engaged in their English lessons and didn’t want to miss any.”*

As in all remote teaching programmes, the role of the local facilitator (the classroom teacher in this case) is fundamental to successful remote teaching. Estela pointed out the central role the classroom teachers had in moving this pilot forward: *“They helped us a lot; they wanted their students to learn, so whenever we had a problem, they found a way to solve it. They tried to do everything to make it happen and we tried from this side as well.”*

Beyond the traditional work that classroom teachers perform covering lessons B and C, the classroom teachers in this pilot project gave a hand in other areas. Estela recalled: *“Children didn’t have X0 computers and no internet connection at home, so they couldn’t do the work regularly done on the learning management system (Crea). So the CT had to do those tasks with them and send me a scanned version via email for me to correct, and I would send her the correction and feedback that way.”*

Reflection on the experience

“I really liked to work with them, mainly for their attitude; they showed that they really wanted to learn and valued this opportunity. As a teacher this was the most enriching aspect of this experience. They wanted to learn more and know more, this is what we want to happen. They were there again and again, even when technology failed, they never gave up and were always willing to participate. They were engaged with both aspects, English and technology,” Estela stated.

With regards to remote teacher teaching into rural schools, Irene advised: *“Remote teachers need to acknowledge that they are going to find a family, a place where they care a lot for each other. Remote teachers need to know the context and get to know as much as possible about each of them because their lives are very different from ours. You need to know if what you will be presenting will be easy or not; for example, parts of the city. Think that they might not have previous knowledge on the topic, so you need to scaffold the lesson in a different way.”*

Quality management of *Ceibal en Inglés*

Gonzalo Negron, Graham Stanley and David Lind

- The quality management system of *Ceibal en Inglés* in Uruguay is currently the largest in the British Council network.
- In the five-year period extending from 2013 to 2017, quality managers based in Uruguay, Argentina and the Philippines conducted over 1,000 observations of English lessons delivered remotely to Uruguayan primary state school children.
- During this same period, the *Ceibal en Inglés* quality managers carried out over 50 evaluations of remote teaching centre operations.
- The effort to improve the quality of teaching and learning in *Ceibal en Inglés* has clearly had an influence on the improvement of student performance since the programme started.

Introduction

This chapter examines the role of quality management in *Ceibal en Inglés*, which has grown in scope from the small-scale observations of teachers undertaken during the pilot phase of the project in 2012 (Banegas, 2013:181) into a complex quality management system, involving approximately 300 teachers, which is “coherent and comprehensive and the largest teacher observation, development and evaluation system the British Council has globally ... in which every remote teacher is observed and evaluated, as well as trained according to needs” (Knagg and Searle, 2016). The need for quality management in *Ceibal en Inglés* can be understood within the broader context of quality management, of managing teaching quality in education in general, and language education in particular. The challenges of establishing reliable quality criteria for lessons taught via videoconferencing will be outlined and data presented that shows how teaching quality has improved during the course of the project. Finally, recommendations will be shared for anyone interested in implementing a similar quality management system in other countries and contexts.

Quality management methodology

Quality management has been defined as a “set of concepts, strategies, tools and beliefs, etc., which are aimed at improving the quality of products and services, reducing the waste and saving costs” (Navaratnam and O’Connor, 1993). Quality management in language teaching, according to White and Hockley et al. (2008) should “inform course planning and development, assessment and placement, and the teaching and learning which occurs in and out of the classroom.” They state that quality outcomes will be achieved “through organising and managing integrated systems and processes” and they stress the importance to effective academic management of “devising agreed-upon key performance indicators (KPIs), which establish measurable goals.”

There exist a number of terms related to quality management that are worth examining. *Quality control* is a term that was coined by and which refers to a range of managerial methods designed to maintain quality of products or services (Feigenbaum, 1983). Quality control takes place after the event.

Quality assurance (QA), on the other hand, as described by Tovey (1994), is an alternative form of ensuring quality in education, which “involves designing systems to deliver quality before the event” (Fidler and Edwards, 1996). In educational projects, establishing a quality assurance system “or integrating local QA practices are important strategies for external accountability and sustainability” (Kiely, 2012).

Most relevant to *Ceibal en Inglés* is *total quality management (TQM)*, which Mukhopadhyay states “is an extension of the quality assurance approach” with an emphasis on “not only on managing quality ... but in developing a ‘quality culture’ amongst all employees,” (2005:28) and which takes time to implement in order to “reach a level where quality becomes culture,” the challenge being to create “the passion and sense of worth about teaching among the teachers, giving them independence and encouragement and, of course, mentoring leadership among colleagues.” (2005:194).

An important issue when TQM is applied to education is that of customer focus, and Mukhopadhyay (2005:43) asks “who is the customer: student or parent or employer or provider (government) or all?” stating that “assessment of quality in education cannot be restricted to needs of the students; it must take into account the perceived needs of other constituents, namely parents, community, government and employers.”

Quality management and teacher observations

Malderez mentions four main purposes of classroom observations: for professional development, for training, for evaluation, and for research. In *Ceibal en Inglés* lesson observation is used mainly as a means of monitoring teaching quality.

Observation has long been a popular way of monitoring teaching quality. Ellis (1994:55) states that “observation is the most suitable method used for measuring the performance of teachers” and Murphy (2013) believes that “classroom observation offers an opportunity for supervisors to assess teachers’ styles, their classroom management skills and various aspects of teaching that are hard to obtain through other forms of evaluation.”

Although observation of teachers by quality managers in *Ceibal en Inglés* is principally an evaluation tool, lesson observations also provide information about this relatively new way of teaching. Care is also taken to provide constructive feedback on teaching techniques and methods with an eye to helping remote teachers evaluate their strengths and weaknesses, so they can improve their practice. As Farrell (2011) writes, observation is one of the most common ways to help teachers reflect on pedagogical practices.

When observation is carried out, the observer needs to be careful that it does not, as O’Leary (2012) describes, become simply a “box-ticking exercise” or rely on “subjective judgements, rather than ... developing the teacher’s ability to assess his or her own practices” (Williams, 1989:85).

In addition to this, there is another difficulty present in observing teachers in *Ceibal en Inglés* because of the remote nature of the teaching. When teachers are observed from the *teaching point* (i.e. the place where the remote teacher (RT) teaches from, the information available to the observer is less than when the observer is in the classroom, where the children and the effect of the teacher’s interventions can be better observed. Gabriela Kaplan, Plan Ceibal Co-ordinator of *Ceibal en Inglés*, has said of this that “everything looks well organised from the teaching point, and the observer can tell if the lesson plan has been implemented, but there is a danger the observer can miss out on the rich information from

the students. For example, it is more difficult to see how the children feel about the lesson, to gauge their reaction to what is being taught.”

Plan Ceibal’s Quality Controller, Isabel Longres also believes this: “You see a lesson completely differently when you are observing from the school. You have to be a very good observer to see what is really happening from the screen and you tend to pay too much attention to what the RT is doing rather than the impact on the learners.”

Because of this, in order for observers to be able to observe objectively and effectively, they require ongoing training. In *Ceibal en Inglés*, regular observation standardisation sessions are held, so that observers have the opportunity to reflect, and this is in line with Gebhard’s assertion that observers need to be “qualified trainers who know what to look for, how to provide effective feedback and how to keep the subjectivity factor to a minimum” (1999:35).

The feedback given to the teacher following the observation should be “objective, systematic, supportive and motivating” rather than “subjective, threatening, frustrating and impressionistic” (Sheal, 1989), which Shah and Harthi (2014) have noted can lead to “teacher burn-out and less effective performance in classrooms.” Bailey (2006) and Cranston (2009) have both mentioned that the observer–observee relationship is key to successful observation, and Wajnryb (1992) mentions that “a positive learning attitude” is required for observation “to capture the classroom events precisely and objectively and go beyond the recording of mere impressions.”

In *Ceibal en Inglés*, it is considered important that the teacher has a pre-observation discussion with the quality manager. Pari has found that “while the pre-observation discussion seemed to be helpful for some, it was stressful for others” (2015), but also mentions that this discussion “helps the observer have a better understanding of the lesson” and gives “the opportunity to discuss the lesson plan from the teacher’s perspective” as well as helping “to make the teacher relaxed and comfortable ... creating a supportive atmosphere” (Pari, 2005).

Observation, above all, is “a powerful tool that enables participants to gather data and gain insights into the classroom teaching and learning” (Mackey and Gass, 2005), and which, when it is effective, can be beneficial to the teachers taking part and can lead to improvement in teaching quality.

Managing quality in *Ceibal en Inglés*

Quality management of *Ceibal en Inglés* has the *Teaching Quality Review* (TQR) at its core. This is an inspection scheme, which includes pre-inspection visits to the remote teaching provider (usually

referred to as *Institute*), the inspection itself and subsequent reports. Inspection reports include recommendations for improvement. As Pickering (1999) mentions: “Inspection schemes have the advantage of offering an expert, external viewpoint of a school’s operations”. Disadvantages, according to Pickering (1999), include the following:

- “The findings are not automatically owned by staff.”
- “Quality initiatives can remain externally driven rather than becoming internally driven.”
- Sometimes there is “a trade-off or tension between ensuring that minimum standards are maintained and helping schools to improve their quality standards.”
- “They can become cumbersome and too dependent on documentation.”

Ceibal en Inglés quality management processes

The TQR is a process that happens at least once a year (usually split into two visits: TQR part 1 and TQR part 2, depending on the size of the Institute). Remote teachers are observed and there is a review of the Institute’s procedures and performance, henceforth referred to as *Institute Assessment*.

During the Institute Assessment, quality managers (QMs) carry out a formal review, which includes:

- Review of the remote teaching provider’s administrative processes and systems
- How cancellations, substitutions and rescheduling of classes are managed
- How issues (i.e. formal complaints, concerns, etc.) are managed
- What provision has been made for orientation of new remote teachers (RTs)
- Continuous professional development (CPD) scheme for RTs
- Institute facilities and teaching/technical resources
- Review of any previous action plans resulting from a prior TQR

The *Institute Assessment* as outlined above and the *Remote Teaching Observations* constitute the TQR.

In the following section, the observation process will be described in more detail.

Remote teaching quality observation process

The aim of the remote teaching quality observation process (figure 1) is to ensure *Ceibal en Inglés* students receive quality instruction according to project standards.

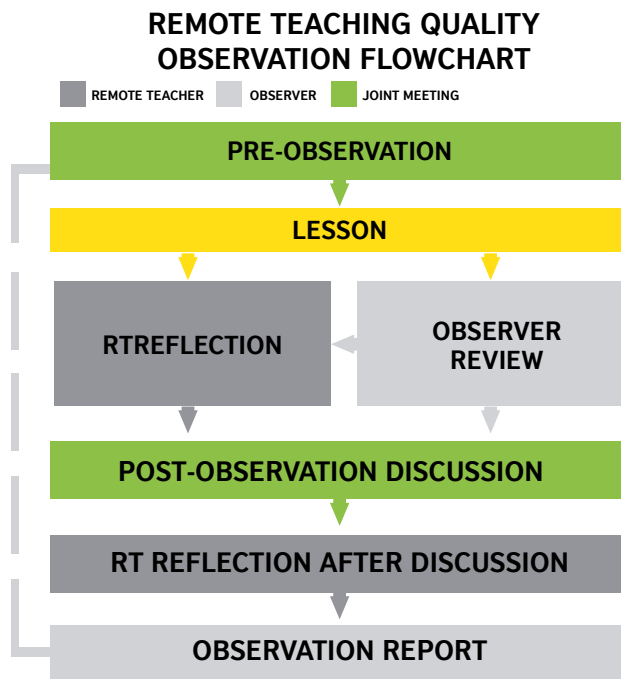


Figure 1: Remote teaching quality observation flowchart

During observations, QMs complete an observation form in order to have a record to provide RTs and Institutes with constructive developmental feedback.

Prior to the TQR, the QM requests the RTs’ availability in order to arrange a meeting with all the RTs to be observed, discuss the process and to hear from the team of teachers at the Institute about how they perceive the specifics of teaching on the project; for example, co-ordination with classroom teachers (CTs), use of *Crea2* (the learning management system), lesson plans and materials, training needs, etc. The QM takes notes and answers questions the RTs may have. A summary of this meeting will be included in the Institute Assessment report.

Together, information from all TQRs are used to assess how the British Council and Plan Ceibal can provide RTs with support during the academic year in question, and to inform improvements for the following year.

Observations then take place, preceded by a pre-observation discussion with the RT to be observed, and followed by an observation feedback session. After the observation, but before the feedback session, the RT completes a post-observation form, reflecting on what happened during the lesson. When this meeting finishes, the RT records the agreed

action points and is invited to add a comment about the observation process in the post-feedback form.

Observation form

An observation form is the main instrument QMs use when observing the lesson. Each descriptor in the form is rated: for instance, an *Exceed* is awarded when there is evidence that the RT goes beyond what is expected in the standard; *met* is given when the standard is mostly and consistently met overall; a *partly met* means that the standard was met to an extent, but there are some weaknesses; while a *not met* indicates that there was no evidence during the lesson to reach the standard. Finally, a *not applicable* is given when circumstances beyond the control of the RT prevent accurate assessment.

These teaching standards have been adapted from the British Council teaching standards (2011) and include the specific criteria required by *Ceibal en Inglés* on the following:

1. Course and lesson planning. The descriptors in this standard would be rated as *exceed* or *met* if the RT, for example, shows evidence of successfully adapting, differentiating, scaffolding or selecting activities to suit the students' needs while meeting the learning outcomes of the lesson; has clear opening and closing routines; checks homework, etc. A *partly met* or *not met* would be given if the adaptations do not follow the syllabus; if there is something unrelated to learning outcomes; or if there is a lack of consistency, etc.

2. Classroom management 1. This is about creating a positive learning environment and encouraging participation. Questions asked include:

- Has the RT built a rapport with the CT and the students?
- Is there a balance of teacher and learner talking time?
- Is there evidence of a variety of interaction patterns, such as pair and group work?

Here the descriptors would be rated as *exceed* or *met* if the RT arranges the furniture to match the interactions of the lesson; shows positive, personable and appreciative interactions with the CT when requesting help with groupings; uses the students' names; responds positively and actively to students' contributions; pays attention to quiet individuals or groups and encourages them to participate; and maximises the opportunities for pair work and group work. A *partly met* or *not met* would be given when there is space to better adapt the seating arrangement to the lesson and this is not done; if the RT reads names off a list to nominate (i.e. not knowing the students); not addressing the CT or

students by name; favouring some students over others, or focusing on the strongest students; or not creating opportunities for students to use the language independently.

3. Classroom management 2. This is related to delivering the lesson and managing activities. Questions to help the observer include:

- Does the RT deliver the class in English, supported by non-verbal strategies to convey meaning?
- Does the teacher give clear instructions, models and demonstrate activities, as well as checking for understanding?
- Is there evidence of applying appropriate strategies for giving feedback and correcting learners' language?
- Does the RT show flexibility in delivering the lesson?

In this section, an *exceed* or a *met* would be given if the RT employs pictures, gestures, expressions; uses examples and concept/instruction-checking questions to convey and check meaning and understanding; demonstrates teaching presence on screen; has natural rhythm and intonation when talking; uses full-screen mode when a whiteboard or presentation is not being used; uses body language when appropriate to convey information; generates interest and enhances his/her presence; and addresses learner errors by showing that the error exists, isolating the error, indicating the type of error and then encouraging self or peer correction. A *partly met* or a *not met* would be given if the RT uses too much translation to convey meaning; overuses Spanish, or code-switches in a sentence (e.g. "Children, did you do your *deberes* (i.e. homework)?"); uses Spanish for instructions; shouts or speaks too fast; doesn't make eye contact; does not vary positioning (e.g. students only ever see a talking head on the screen); ignores or doesn't hear students' errors; or overpraises or doesn't respond to what is happening in the class and proceeds regardless with the lesson plan.

4. ELT subject knowledge. This includes the RTs' ability to grade their own language; to provide accurate and appropriate oral and written examples for the learners; to demonstrate awareness of learner difficulties; and to use techniques and procedures for developing receptive and productive skills. An RT would receive an *exceed* or a *met* if he/she uses simple language appropriate for the level of the class; tries to use words closely related to Spanish; speaks accurately in English; is able to identify and anticipate problems and their solutions (in the pre-observation form); listens to and responds to what students say; accommodates students with special educational needs; supports students and

scaffolds speaking and writing tasks; and effectively manages reading and listening comprehension tasks. A *partly met* or a *not met* would be given if the RT uses unnecessary metalanguage; misspells words on the board or in a presentation; makes mistakes and does not correct them; and does not take into consideration other possible answers to questions or activities.

5. Understanding the learners. This is mainly about raising learner awareness; helping learners monitor their own learning process; encouraging learning habits and learner training activities; differentiating activities according to individual learner needs; and demonstrating an understanding of the culture and context of the school and the learners. A RT would get an *exceed* or a *met* if he/she takes the time to help students become better aware of how language works; encourages self-correction; and checks and praises homework. The RT would receive a *partly met* or a *not met* if the students find the tasks too easy, difficult or boring; the RT teaches each level in the same way; or ignores special educational needs students, expects them to achieve the same or does not adapt activities.

6. Learning technologies. This includes using presentations, websites, etc. in the lesson; good use of the video camera and the remote control to aid learning and exploit the RTs role and presence; and the RTs' ability to troubleshoot basic technology problems during the lesson. Here an *exceed* or a *met* would be given if the RT incorporates attractive and motivating images to his/her presentation; effectively uses the camera to zoom or pans on both cameras when appropriate; always has a plan B in case the technology malfunctions. A *partly met* or a *not met* would be given if the RT uses copyright-protected images without permission; overcrowds a presentation with text or images; uses fancy fonts the students (particularly those with special educational needs) will find difficult to read; or wastes too much time trying to figure something out (without calling tech support and/or moving on).

7. Co-ordination. The RT should show evidence of co-ordinating the whole cycle of lessons (A, B and C); being supportive to CTs' concerns, taking into consideration the CTs' knowledge and experience. An *exceed* or a *met* would be given if there is evidence of co-ordination with the CT in the form of emails, text messages, screenshots, etc. A *partly met* or a *not met* would be given if the RT does not keep in touch during the week with the CT or fails to show evidence of teamwork or support to the CT.

8. Crea. This is the learning management system (LMS) that RTs and CTs use to interact with learners between classes and to complement and support the weekly lesson cycle. QMs focus on the use of the platform in terms of the effective use of its functions and features (messaging, interactive activities,

correction of homework, discussions and forums, among others). An RT would receive an *exceed* or a *met* if he/she guides the CT and learners to work in the platform; promotes online learning tools in *Crea* and the internet in general; or corrects homework in the platform and gives feedback on a regular basis. However, a *partly met* or *not met* would be given if the RT and the students do not work on the platform without a valid reason; the RT does not teach the students and CT how to work on *Crea*; or the RT does not correct the students' homework regularly.

9. Professionalism. The RT should show evidence of having a professional approach to teaching, including interest in continuing professional development (CPD). RTs would receive an *exceed* or *met* if they complete the pre- and post-observation and post-feedback forms in full and in a timely manner; reflect on own performance; show evidence of completing required training courses and of seeking to develop their own teaching skills by engaging in CPD. On the other hand, they would receive a *partly met* or a *not met* if the RT does not complete the pre- and post-forms with the information required; if they do not show evidence of completion of required training; or if they do not show any interest in CPD, or by not showing improvement in any action points they might have been given after their last observation.

Underperformance

Managing underperformance is necessary in order to ensure improvement in teaching quality throughout the project. Concerns may be detected during observations, or feedback may be given to the Institute or a QM if received via another channel (e.g. a complaint by a CT, etc.). When this happens, teacher performance issues will be investigated and resolved by the QM and the Institute Co-ordinator/Director working collaboratively. In order to ensure that the protocol is objective, fair and transparent, all reported issues undergo the following three-stage process:

Stage 1 – Receipt

The issue may have been raised by a CT, *Plan Ceibal* or other source, and reported directly to *Plan Ceibal*, a QM or Institute Co-ordinator/Director. Once this happens, the British Council or *Plan Ceibal* will acknowledge receipt of the negative feedback to the person reporting it. Details of the issue will be recorded in the issue management system and assigned to a QM for investigation (stage 2) and follow-up (stage 3). The Institute Co-ordinator may ask for updates on the status of the issue at any time. Quality Managers will also keep *Plan Ceibal's Quality Controller* informed about any issues relating to RTs.

Stage 2 – Investigation

The issue will be fully investigated within two weeks and a decision taken on action to be implemented.

Until then the issue will remain 'unverified'. Investigation may include talking to the Institute Co-ordinator, the RT, and formal observation of two classes (one of these will be with a different class to the one reported). If the issue concerns the team-teaching relationship between the RT and CT and this cannot be resolved, Plan Ceibal usually ask to change the RT for a different one at the same Institute, if there is one available. If negative feedback is 'verified' to constitute underperformance, the Institute Co-ordinator will be informed so that a follow-up action plan is put into practice within a month. If the negative feedback is decided to be 'unverified', the issue will become 'resolved'.

Stage 3 – Follow up

Assuming an underperformance is non-critical but continues to be problematic, the Institute Co-ordinator, QM and RT will agree on a new action plan. The action plan will detail specific points to be worked on and a timeframe of up to one month for improvement and review. If the performance does not improve as stated in the action plan, Plan Ceibal reserve the right to ask that the RT does not continue with the project.

Institute assessment

After observations have been carried out, the QM writes a report, analyses the data collected during the observations and agrees on a date for an interview with the Institute Co-ordinator. The QM presents the first draft of the Institute Assessment report for discussion. Apart from a summary of the results of the observations and of the meetings with teachers and Institute Co-ordinator, the report includes an action plan with clear deadlines for the Co-ordinator to implement in order to improve the quality of teaching in the Institute.

Quality management in practice 2015–16

When the data collected during TQRs is analysed, improvements in teaching quality can be detected. The following table (figure 2) shows the percentage of *met* standards in 2015 and 2016 by the six British Council-managed Institutes. All Institutes *met* 70 per cent of the *Ceibal en Inglés* quality standards two years in a row, which translates into a noteworthy number of high-quality lessons delivered by these providers.

Overall, the quality of the teaching of the six British Council-managed Institutes in *Ceibal en Inglés* increased by 2.5 per cent in 2016 compared to the previous year (figure 3). This indicates that the action plans resulting from the TQR and included in each Institute Assessment Report to solve the challenges and difficulties have had an impact on improvement and on the increase in the quality of the teaching and on the Institutes' processes and systems.

2015–16 Analysis per Institute

More specific analysis of data is also undertaken. For instance, we can see from the data above and below (Figure 3) that the performance of Institute 3 declined from 2015 to 2016. There was a drop of five per cent in the *exceeds* and *met*s received while the *partly met*s and *not met*s increased by one per cent. In this case, the drop in performance was due to communications problems and underperformance in operational procedures, and led to a major restructure of the Institute.

This was of course evident to all working in project operations, but it is useful to be able to quantify this through the data here, and it also shows that the quality management indicators have a bearing on what actually happens in an Institute.

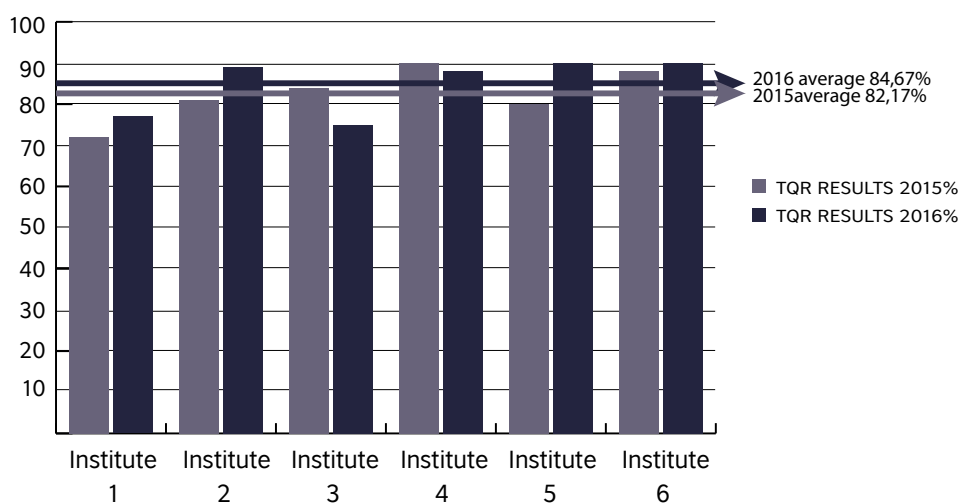


Figure 2: Comparison of TQR results for British Council-managed Institutes 2015–16

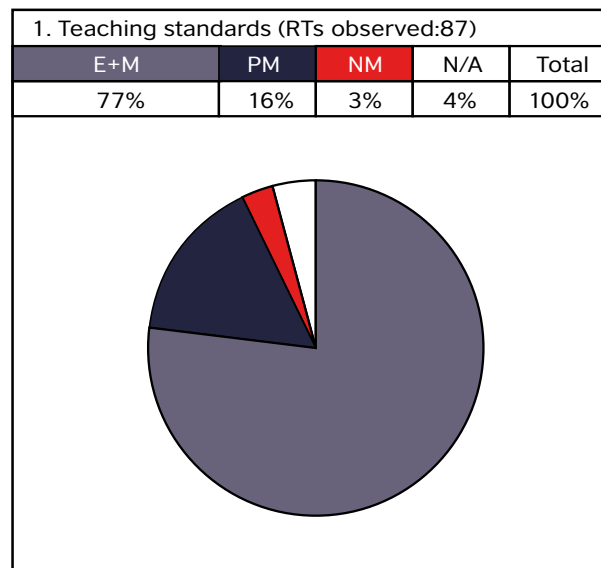
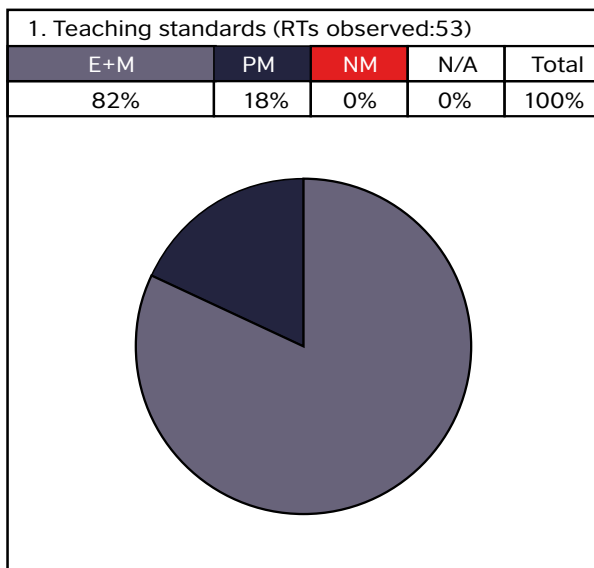
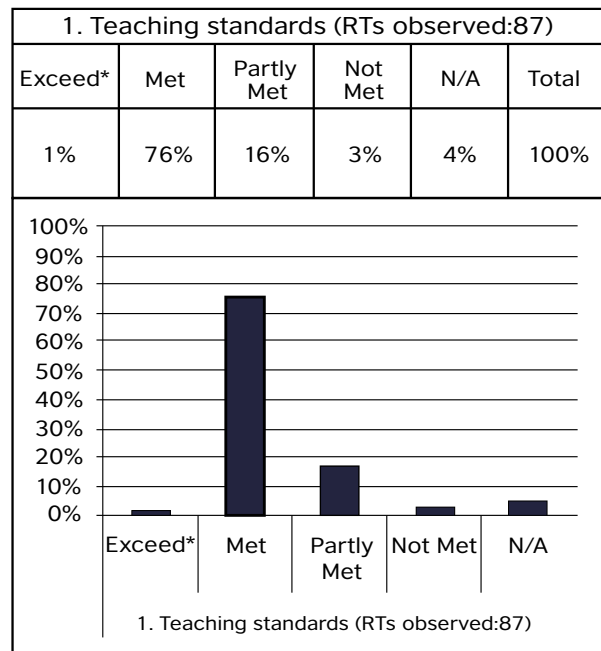
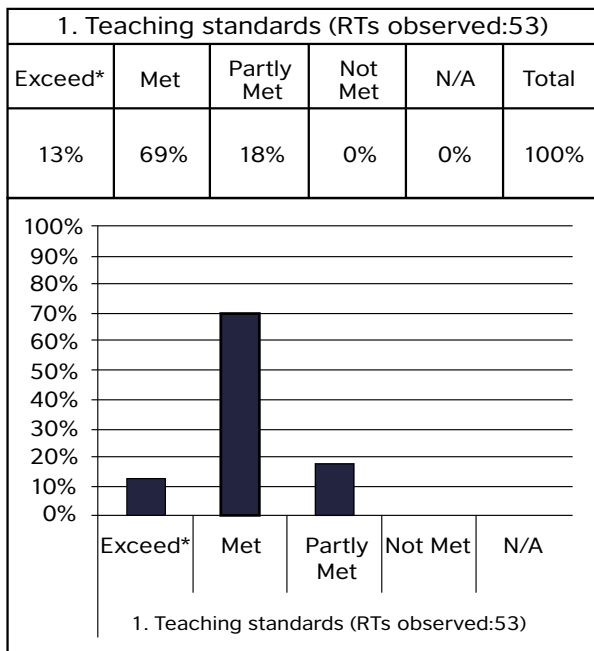


Figure 3: Results of observations Institute 3 2015–16

General analysis of results

Four of the Institutes increased the quality of their teaching in 2016, while two of them underperformed in the same year. The impact of quality management can best be seen in the following example:

- Institute 3, the biggest and most complex Institute delivering *Ceibal en Inglés* lessons, did not meet the standards required by *Ceibal en Inglés* and the action plan designed by the QM. This led to a complete restructuring during the second semester of the year, as mentioned above.
- In the case of Institute 4, the RTs are non-native Spanish speakers and they found it challenging to effectively communicate with the CTs during the class and in co-ordination. Some of the strategies designed by the QM included RTs receiving Spanish lessons and having two *Spanish-speaking*

co-ordinators to monitor and provide support to the RTs when communicating with their CTs either via email or through videoconferencing. These actions have resulted in visible improvements.

Summary and conclusions

Quality management in *Ceibal en Inglés* provides RTs with a full and formal observation cycle, with evaluative and developmental feedback on the teaching through videoconferencing, alongside associated co-ordination, professionalism and other related aspects. Quality management also provides the Institutes with feedback about how far they are meeting or failing to meet standards in relation to what is expected. This is achieved through assessment of their processes and systems in order to guarantee the quality of remote teaching.

The teaching standards in the observation form are descriptors that reflect the RT's performance during the delivery of their lessons. The teaching standards are the key indicators that guide the QM to help suggest corrective strategies in those cases where the quality of the teaching is below standard.

The eight areas of the Institute Assessment allow evaluation of the quality and productivity of the Institute, which helps the design and implementation of an action plan to overcome any challenges and difficulties detected. The Institute Assessment analyses the practices and methods that are reasonable to consider regarding the operational and pedagogical aspects of the Institute, the service they provide and the internal actions that control and guarantee that the operations comply with the expectations of *Ceibal en Inglés*.

How effective is quality management in *Ceibal en Inglés* on student learning outcomes? It is difficult to measure the impact on learning, but it is not unreasonable to state that quality management is one of the reasons for the improvement in results in the annual end-of-year student assessment (see Marconi and Brovetto in this volume). Ultimately, this is the reason for pursuing a strategy aimed at improving teaching quality – i.e. its expected positive effect on student learning outcomes.

The large scale and complexity of *Ceibal en Inglés* calls for an ambitious quality management system – one with sufficient scope to accommodate the geographically dispersed remote teaching network, but also carefully fine-tuned in order to determine whether the many interdependent variables effectively come together to enable learning. In this chapter we have sought to give the reader a glimpse of how QM processes are working towards this goal. The *Ceibal en Inglés* quality management system draws on best practice of English language teaching, based on British Council Teaching Skills (British Council, 2011) then adapted to the local Uruguayan context and the context of remote teaching. This should be useful not only to *Ceibal en Inglés* remote teaching practitioners, but to a growing number of teachers worldwide who teach synchronously via videoconferencing.

Navigating a course for the *Ceibal en Inglés* RT, who must interact not only with students, but also with classroom teachers, has been an ongoing process of discovery for all those involved on the academic side of the project. Quality management is at the centre of this endeavour, and has aimed to accommodate the complex interplay of human relationships present in remote lessons, which in many ways are different to the teacher–student dynamics of the traditional face-to-face primary learner classroom setting. At the outset, there were few documented precedents for the *Ceibal en Inglés* project management team to refer to. This chapter has aimed to add to the

emerging body of literature that has grown around remote teaching, examples of which are referenced in this volume.

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11.1

Peer observation for remote teacher development

Willy Cardoso

This case study describes a peer observation activity carried out with remote teachers (RTs) from SMEAG, a *Ceibal en Inglés* provider based in the Philippines.

Introduction

Whereas peer observation for newly hired remote teachers (RTs) has been part of the training programme of this institute, it has been a more challenging activity to implement as continual professional development (CPD) due to time and spatial constraints. The former is a common challenge across different settings where teachers are full-time and teaching a packed timetable, with limited availability for CPD. The latter, however, is more specific to this type of teaching and to this institute.

The teaching points (TPs) in this institute were designed to accommodate one RT and the videoconferencing equipment (VCE) only, therefore making it difficult to fit an observer inside the TP. For this reason, peer observation was usually done with one RT observing another through the window of the TP; that is, one RT teaching a remote lesson through

VCE inside a small TP, and through the TP window another RT could watch the lesson on the VCE screen. The shortcomings, as expected, were that the observer couldn't hear the lesson very clearly, and would be sitting in the corridor, where there could be noise interference from other classes. Another constraint would be that only one RT at a time could observe a given lesson, as it would not be possible to accommodate more than one observer by the TP window.

The solution to this was to set up multi-point connections in order to offer the observers more suitable conditions to learn from the peer observation activities. Multi-point is a scheduled connection between three or more VCEs. In this way a remote lesson would be happening as usual, with a connection between the RT and the school, and its audio and video also available to a third point (the observers). The main advantage, however, was that the multi-point offered RTs the opportunity to observe lessons in small groups, with a facilitator, and to discuss what they were seeing as it unfolded in real time.



Peer observation via multi-point videoconferencing

In this modality, RTs observed a live lesson from a room other than the TP. The videoconferencing (VC) technology allowed us to relay the call between the RT and the school to a third screen without the observers being seen or heard.

The first round of VC peer observation followed a 'match-making' approach in which groups of RTs were formed based on common areas they needed to improve as identified by quality managers (QMs) in quality review observations. The groups then observed RTs who had consistently met or exceeded the teaching standards that needed to be worked on.



The main standards focused on in the first round of VC peer observation were:

- RT has clear classroom routines in order to create a safe and secure learning environment for learners. L2 is consistently used for this purpose.
- RT carries out activities in a logical order with appropriate timing and pace.
- RT creates rapport with learners and the CT; for example, by addressing them by name.
- RT involves learners in the class and ensures every learner has a chance to participate.
- RT makes use of a variety of interaction patterns, e.g. individual, pair and group work.

The main benefit of this new way of observing was that as RTs watched the lesson they were able to

comment on the selected areas if anything in the lesson stood out for them. Another advantage was the presence of a QM, who would draw the RTs' attention to the same areas when they became visible. For example, sometimes the RTs did not realise some strategies used by the observed RT had been established as routines. The QM's previous experience of observing the same RT made it possible for him to highlight these routines to the observers and to direct their attention to their effectiveness.

After the live observation, RTs had a short conference with the observed RT for debriefing and to explore any questions raised during the observation. The QM also offered some feedback to the observed RT and summarised the main areas the group observed.

Some further steps that could be added to a process like this are: a written reflection by the observers in order to formalise the knowledge gained during the observation cycle; and a self-assessment by the observed RT, preferably through video-stimulated recall (i.e. watching a recording of the class with the QM and reflecting on it).

Furthermore, a major technical difference was made possible in VC-based observations. By watching a lesson on the VCE, it is possible to observe the class from the front and to see students' faces. This is not usually possible in the traditional mode where the observer sits at the back of the classroom, and is not able to observe students' reactions, facial expressions, puzzled looks, attention span, etc

On the downside, the main technical challenge in doing this was that the multi-point connection might fail. The system adopted required the connection to be booked one week in advance, with the set up performed by a centralised office and inaccessible by the RT if any troubleshooting was needed. In this case, a failed multi-point connection meant a cancelled peer observation. Another thing that needed to be considered was that multi-point connections limited the pan and zoom functions of the camera, so this needed to be discussed in advance with all involved in order to find ways to minimise the negative impact this may have had in the lesson.



Impact

At the end of the peer observation cycle RTs were asked to comment on the new approach. Below is a summary of what they said.

1. How do you compare observing by multi-point to observations through the TP window?

“The multi-point observation was better; it was more comfortable, no distraction.”

“I could observe both the RT and the class response to her during the session and could have clear audio of the exchange.”

“I could witness what strategies worked with the students and what difficulties the RT experienced through the responses given by the students.”

2. What did you learn from this observation? Do you think you would have learned the same if it was not via multi-point?

“There was a big difference between the two because I learned more while doing the multi-point observation. I also learned that I hadn’t really established strong routines with my class and that I wasn’t using TPR maybe because I still feel awkward doing it sometimes.”

“I think I learned a lot more, as having a quiet environment to observe the class helped. If I had observed from outside the TP room, it probably wouldn’t have been the same since there are tons of other things that could distract you (other RTs teaching their classes, people walking by, the sound of the buzzer, etc).”

3. How can this type of peer-observation be improved? Any recommendations for future peer-observations?

“I guess the thing to be improved is the possibility of the camera zooming in and out.”

“I think having three people to observe a class is okay but four or five is also probably doable. There would be more ideas or observations that could be shared.”

4. In your opinion, was it good to select a few teaching standards to focus on? What do you think about the selection of who you observed (i.e. the matching)?

“Yes, it was quite good to focus on some pre-selected teaching standards. Although, I was also taking down notes on other variables I observed. In the end, this type of peer observation is quite good.”

Moreover, from a quality management perspective, this also served as training for RTs to better understand the teaching standards they would later be evaluated against.

Looking forward

Based on feedback from RTs and the QMs’ assessment, peer observation has shown to be a valuable activity. It is recommended that more time for peer observation is allocated during pre-service training and CPD of remote teachers and that more observation tasks are developed specifically for remote teaching, taking into account the technological aspects and challenges of teaching remotely via VCE. Moreover, different tasks for different levels of teaching experience and



developmental needs would also be a valuable addition to peer observation schemes in general. Below are three examples of tasks used in pre-service RT training that could be incorporated into a group activity of remote peer observation.

1 Focus: Adapting lesson plans. Observation task: *Read the original lesson plan and note any changes made by the RT, e.g. stages skipped or tasks added. Were the learning objectives still addressed and achieved?*

2 Focus: Giving instructions. Observation task: *Select two tasks and write down, word for word, the instructions the RT gave, and any instruction-checking questions s/he used. Were the instructions successful? Were the learners immediately on task?*

3 Focus: Use of VC equipment. Observation task: *At what times did the RT project only the image of him/herself (i.e. no PPT or other screen)? What was the effect of this?*

For further inquiry into peer observation activities, teachers, mentors and managers are invited to reflect on the following questions:

- How much observation of high-performance teaching is there in pre-service teacher training? What about in in-service training and CPD? Is it enough?

- Who are teachers observing? Is there a systematic approach to matching observer-observed teachers? How targeted to teachers' needs are the observations?
- How much are teachers developing through peer observation? What sort of things do they learn?
- Are pre- and post-observation activities helping teachers make the most of peer observations?

Finally, remote peer observation has potential to foster a community of practice where teachers from different locations can observe their colleagues and learn from them. With VC-based remote teaching being a fairly new way of teaching, it would be beneficial to give more remote teachers the opportunity to learn from each other and to together generate and disseminate knowledge in this area.



12

Managing quality in a remote teaching centre

Verónica Pintos

- A combination of Total Quality Management (TQM) and Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) adopted at the remote teaching centre in Buenos Aires is starting to have a positive effect on overall teaching quality.
- Quality assurance, a project requirement, has been successfully implemented, and has been managed by the RTC Quality Co-ordinator.
- Improving teaching quality has been made central to continuous professional development (CPD) and the cornerstone of this is peer observation.

Introduction

Ceibal en Inglés is a complex project with many different stakeholders (see Kaplan and Brovetto in this volume) and considerable time and effort is dedicated to improving the quality of teaching and learning. There are two levels of quality management in Ceibal en Inglés. Quality management at the project scale (see Negron, Stanley and Lind in this volume) determines and assures the quality of remote teaching across the project, through the design, development and management of processes to externally evaluate each of the providers. The management of quality in a remote teaching centre (RTC), however, requires the implementation of internal quality assurance and quality control systems. The focus of this chapter is on the management of quality seen from the perspective of a large RTC, with specific reference to the British Council RTC in Buenos Aires, Argentina

Background

Quality management in general

The origins of quality management has been identified by Heyworth as being “systems of control carried out by ‘inspectors’ who checked for errors: (2013:282). However, the purpose of quality management has been expanded since then towards attaining “quality goals through planning, monitoring, assuring and improving quality” (Vlašić, Vale, and Puhar, 2009:566).

There are many different terms used in the literature to define and characterise the management of

quality, including Quality Control (QC), Quality Assurance (QA), Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI), and Total Quality Management (TQM) (Shortell, et.al., 1995; Crawford and Shutler, 1999; Taylor and Hill, 1993; and Heyworth, 2013).

According to Taylor and Hill (1993:22), Quality Assurance refers to evidence showing proof of “an organisation’s potential effectiveness,” concentrating on “written evidence, documented systems and procedures”. Quality Assurance is “carried out before and during an activity to make sure it is done well,” whereas Quality Control “checks the finished product” (Heyworth (2013:288).

Total Quality Management (TQM) comes from the context of industrial management, although the same management principles can be applied equally well in the service sector (Crawford and Shutler, 1999:67). TQM is associated with customer-focused views of quality (Taylor and Hill, 1993; Vlašić et al., 2009), which largely depend on the engagement of all of the members of an organisation: “The employees identify problems and opportunities for improvement and engage in endeavours which determine root causes of these problems, generate and choose solutions and implement improvements” (Taylor and Hill, 1993:21).

Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) started in the field of healthcare and is based on the analysis of how an organisation is doing and how it can do better (NLC, 2013). Shortell et al. (1995:378) explain that CQI and TQM can be combined, resulting in a system of quality management, which includes “continuous improvement, customer focus, structured processes and organisation-wide participation”. CQI and TQM differ from traditional Quality Assurance because of their focus on “understanding and improving underlying work processes and systems”, rather than “correcting after-the-fact errors of individuals”.

Approaches to QM can also be classified considering the perspective each organisation favours when implementing quality improvements. For instance, the defender approach aims at complying with external quality assurance accreditation requirements; the analyser approach “follows a relatively ordered sequence of steps from top

management training to lower-level employee training”; the prospector approach makes emphasis on taking advantage of opportunities as they arise and has “an overall planned framework of implementation ... employees are trained and involved in the processes as needs arise (just-in-time) training, so that the training becomes immediately useful”; and the reactor/ opportunistic approach does not include quality improvement techniques in its plan but uses these techniques to deal with issues (Shortell et al., 1995:382).

Quality management in education

Quality in educational contexts has become increasingly important, and TQM, as a management philosophy, has become more influential (Crawford and Shutler, 1999). Promptly responding to clients’ requirements in terms of quality needs is crucial for an institution to develop and improve its teaching. Vlašić et al. state that quality management has become “a business function as well as any other function, involving people of all profiles and from all the departments of the organisation” (2009:566

Quality management in distance learning

A report on Quality Issues in Distance Learning by the Board of Directors of AACSB (2007) provides guidelines on how institutions can develop TQM in distance learning programmes. Although the report is aimed at higher education, it is also relevant to other contexts, including remote language teaching in primary education. For instance, the report states that managing the staff of teachers, from a quality standpoint, should be adjusted to the demands of the learning situation, and the pedagogy and technology to be put in place, among other aspects.

The study by Crawford and Shutler (1999:72) on quality management in education indicates that TQM can be successfully implemented in educational contexts provided there is a focus on training teachers and showing them “how to set goals, how to teach effectively and how to assess the quality of their work with students.”

Overall, most research studies tend to relate QM to the successful implementation of systems that improve assessment and evaluation of students and institutional accreditation by external auditors. In other words, “the concept of ‘quality’ is very general and ... it is often used to refer to very different aspects of educational activity” (Heyworth, 2013:311). Furthermore, most authors agree with the fact that implementing quality improvements may be more difficult in large-size institutions as a result of the high number of organisational layers and the complexity of their operations (Shortell et al., 1995).

Quality management in language teaching

Heyworth (2013) asserts that there is very little research on how quality management impacts on language teaching practices. Furthermore, no published research reports have been found on quality management in the context of remote language teaching. Most of the literature refers to higher education, distance learning programmes and language teaching in general. Very little has been reported about managing quality in primary education in face-to-face environments, outside of inspection reports produced by organisations such as Ofsted in the UK (www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted).

Quality management in remote language teaching

What follows is an examination of how quality management of primary English lessons taught for Ceibal en Inglés was designed and implemented at a remote teaching centre. The following questions were explored in order to examine how quality management at scale (1,000+ lessons per week) works in practice at the British Council’s remote teaching centre (RTC) in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

- What hierarchical structure is needed to manage quality in the RTC?
- What communication is necessary between the management and teachers?
- What recruitment processes have been put in place to help the RTC employ new teaching staff?
- Who is responsible for evaluating the teaching quality at the RTC?
- How are remote teachers (RTs) supported in their teaching of remote lessons?
- What systems are in place to assure high-quality standards of remote teaching?
- What evidence is collected to ensure remote teaching delivery is effective?
- How are teaching quality issues reported, tracked, and dealt with?
- What is done to promote a culture of quality and improvement in the quality of teaching?

Research strategy

In order to answer the questions and come to a better understanding of how quality management at the RTC in Buenos Aires developed in the three years since it opened, documentation produced in 2015-17

related to quality was analysed. Although the evidence relates to a very specific context (i.e. a large-scale provider of primary lessons of Ceibal en Inglés from Buenos Aires), general conclusions can be drawn, which are likely to be helpful in other contexts, particularly when managing lessons delivered synchronously (i.e. live online).

Analysis and interpretation of the data

The role of the Quality Co-ordinator

In March 2016, a Quality Coordinator role was introduced to the RTC because the number of lessons taught to Ceibal en Inglés increased to over 1,000 per week, and it was felt necessary to employ someone whose role was dedicated to assuring teaching quality.

The Quality Co-ordinator’s main duties were:

- Ensuring high-quality standards of remote language teaching
- Implementing an observation scheme for evaluating teaching quality
- Developing the teaching skills of the remote teachers
- Monitoring the delivery of teaching at the RTC
- Mentoring RTs when required

- Liaising with Plan Ceibal, the RTC Co-ordinator, and the British Council Quality Manager in Argentina

At the RTC, the Quality Co-ordinator was to work closely with the Operations Manager (OM), responsible for allocating “teachers in a way that maximises benefits for the Centre ... while meeting customers’ satisfaction targets and quality standards...” (n.d, Operations Manager role profile), and the Academic Manager whose role also includes a requirement that “quality standards are maintained” (n.d, Academic Manager role profile)

Management of quality at the RTC

These descriptions show a tendency towards TQM at the RTC, but the management of quality at the RTC is also driven by quality control and quality assurance systems. It is intended that these systems should create favourable conditions for future implementation of a combined Total Quality Management and Continuous Quality Improvement (TQM + CQI) model in pursuance of quality improvement.

Managing quality at the RTC is designed to combine quality control and quality assurance, with an emphasis on supervision of quality taking place before, during and after teaching remotely. The chart below summarises the main components of the system.

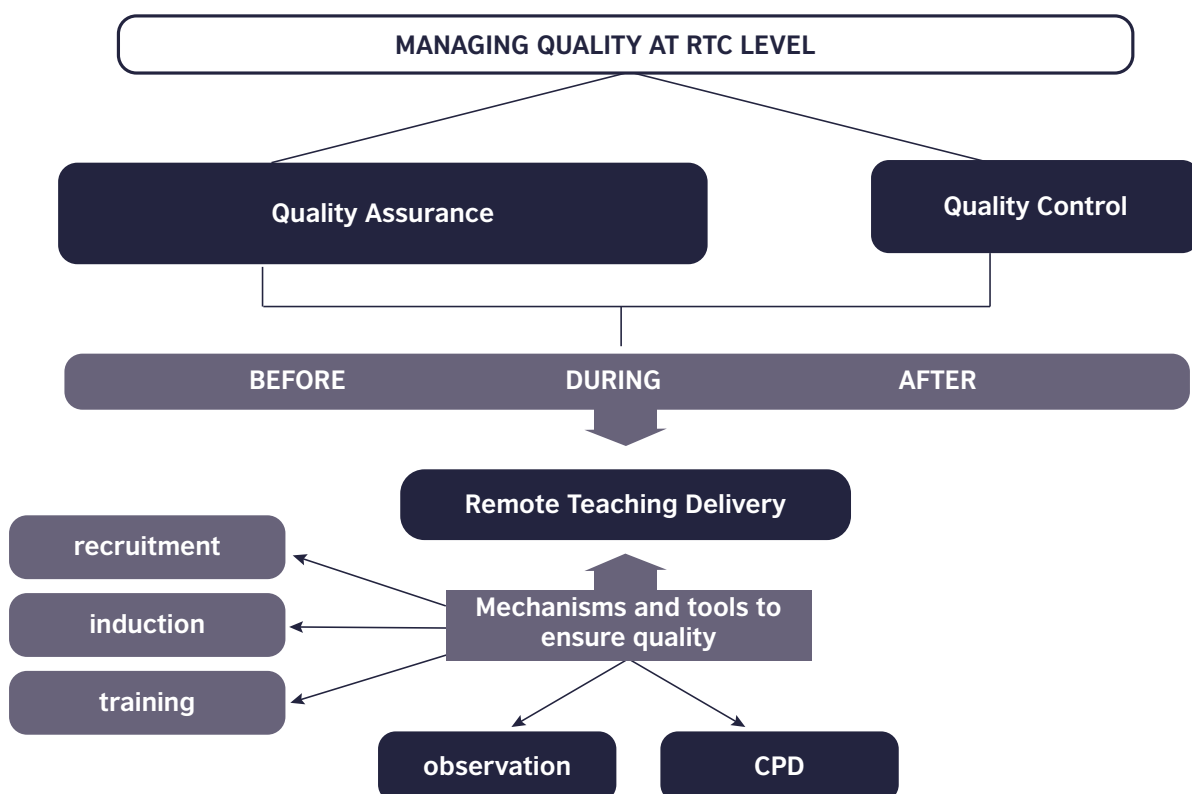


Figure 1: Quality management at the RTC

Recruitment of new teaching staff

As illustrated in figure 1 above, quality management at the RTC begins with recruitment. Recruitment of RTs follows a three-stage standardised procedure:

- Selection. After analysing their suitability for the position using a role profile, candidates are shortlisted and then interviewed by the recruitment manager.
- Offer Successful candidates are contacted by the OM about their availability and they are then offered teaching hours based on the availability of lessons.
- Induction. A ten-hour induction training on remote teaching in the context of Ceibal en Inglés.

Once the induction is completed, RTs are assigned by co-ordinators a timetable of teaching hours. Observation and follow-up supervision of the RTs in action is carried out by three different members of the management team: first by the co-ordinator (within 30 days of being recruited), followed by the Academic Manager (within 60 days after start date) and finally by the Quality Co-ordinator (within 90 days)

The aim of these observations is to evaluate the extent to which the training received has been successful, to assess the RT in action and to collect data for the RTs' continuing professional development (CPD).

Continuous professional development

All RTs are asked to participate in CPD, which is an important part of the management of teaching quality. RTs self-assess their strengths and weaknesses as teachers and this is used by teacher co-ordinators to prepare training and development sessions. Training sessions are offered face to face and online, and are recorded to allow those RTs who cannot attend on the day to be able to watch what they have missed.

In addition to CPD, during induction new RTs are provided with an example observation form and observation procedures, so they know what to expect.

CPD specific to remote teaching has been offered in the following areas:

- Software and technical skills
- Using technology in the remote language classroom
- Using the Ceibal en Inglés Learning Management System (Crea)
- Co-ordination with classroom teachers (CTs)

- Peer observation
- Classroom management
- Exploring action research
- Procedures for multi-point videoconferencing

CPD also encourages the sharing of good practice, usually focusing on classroom management, motivation strategies and techniques to reduce mother tongue usage in the remote lesson.

Focal points

To help RTs, there are a number of experienced RTs acting as focal points for the following:

- Crea, (the Uruguayan Learning Management System (LMS))
- Materials development
- Learning technology

This means that RTs not only receive support from co-ordinators but there are also a number of other people they can go to for advice and support.

Quality standards

Teaching quality is measured against a number of remote teaching standards, set at project level. The RTC quality assurance and control systems must, therefore, be linked to these.

Quality at the RTC is shared amongst RTs using several different means:

- Video recording of success stories, which are shown on the TV monitor placed in the teachers' common area
- Voice recording of lessons for RTs to be able to analyse their use of L2 and minimise use of L1

Quality records

Teacher co-ordinators keep profile folders, where they store action plans and trackers. Trackers usually take the form of spreadsheets that record useful information about RTs, such as contact details, availability, CPD records, evidence of RTs' interventions in Crea, etc.

Apart from these trackers recording information about RTs, the following records are also kept:

- Child Protection tracker detailing incidents reported by RTs.
- Quality Co-ordinator's observation tracker: a file

containing a register of all the lesson observations carried out by the Quality Co-ordinator.

- Quality issues tracker, which contains information about any issues reported internally or by the project Quality Manager. Issues typically reported might be related to a RT (e.g. pace of class, lack of co-ordination with CT, etc.) or a CT (lack of involvement, no follow-up classes being taught, etc.) Each issue is classified according to severity, as shown in the table below.

Severity of issue	
Alert	An observation or concern about a class, which requires probably minor attention from management, such as pace of class being too fast or slow; or the CT not responding to co-ordination, etc.
Minor non-conformity	Teacher is not following lesson plan, or using excessive L1 to the point that learning is not occurring as expected.
Major non-conformity	CT is not present in the room, causing severe disruption to lesson; RT and CT relationship is not working, etc.

Table 1: Severity of quality issues.

Management of quality issues

The RTC defines quality issues as any complaint received from any of the individuals involved in Ceibal en Inglés regarding classroom management or anything that may impact the lesson negatively (communications, materials, etc.).

RT performance issues reported to the RTC are investigated following protocols outlined in the Ceibal en Inglés Teaching Quality Review (TQR) Handbook. There is also a document produced by the Quality Co-ordinator, which establishes the procedures teacher co-ordinators should follow (Handling RT issues).

Following issues, action plans for RTs may be produced by the Academic Manager and overseen by the Quality Co-ordinator. Teacher co-ordinators are in charge of monitoring the work of their RTs so as they meet the objectives in action plans. Action plans and evidence of completion are shared with project quality managers on a regular basis.

Supporting documentation to help deal with the management of quality issues includes:

- Action plan template: the first document to be produced when an issue is received from any of the individuals involved in Ceibal en Inglés. This

document is updated by the Academic Manager or the Teacher Co-ordinator in charge of the issue.

- Data collection folder: a digital folder to collect data when issues are raised.
- Performance improvement plan: a document produced when RT issues are not resolved within a month. If an issue has not been resolved within that period, the RT will be put on a Performance Improvement Plan.

Observation to promote teaching quality

Since the specifics of remote language teaching is unfamiliar to most teachers, sharing good practice has proven to be an important part of CPD. Observing RTs at work is a good way of identifying this.

The introduction of peer observations has proven to be a useful tool for helping teachers become comfortable with remote teaching. During their induction, RTs are requested to observe a minimum of two lessons before they start teaching or shortly after they have started. Before observing a lesson, RTs are given guidance and procedures for observation are explained, emphasising that the practice of watching a colleague's class is part of the daily practice at the RTC. Post-observation, the observer has a meeting with either the Academic Manager or the Quality Co-ordinator to reflect on the lesson.

There are different cycles of observation during the year. The first observation cycle is triggered by the probationary period stage, just after an RT has started. Everyone at the RTC, teachers and managers, are involved in observations for developmental purposes. Teacher co-ordinators lead the peer observations, matching RTs in terms of strengths and weaknesses, so that the RTs can make the most of the peer observations.

Teaching Quality Review

The RTC is evaluated against standards set by the client through a process called Teaching Quality Review (TQR). For a complete description of the TQR, see Negrón, Stanley and Lind, this volume. The RTC prepares for the TQR by organising schedules and communicating the process and procedures to RTs in timely manner. Weekly meetings are held with teacher co-ordinators before, during, and after the TQR so that they know what is expected of them.

During the TQR, RTs are observed by a project Quality Manager (QM). Before the TQR, it is important that all RTs have already been observed and given guidance on any areas they need to work on. The RTs are told which lesson has been chosen for their TQR observation and the QM who will observe their lesson. RTs then complete a pre-observation form. Once the

lesson has been observed, the RT meets the QM with their Teacher Co-ordinator for feedback. The Teacher Co-ordinator takes notes during this meeting, to have a record of any points the RT needs to follow up on.

After the TQR, RTs work on their academic actions plans, which contain advice resulting from observations undertaken by QMs. These action plans are then followed up by QMs later in the year, helped by progress reports sent by the RTC Quality Co-ordinator.

Conclusions

Quality management at the RTC in Buenos Aires is driven by internal quality assurance and control systems, combined with a strong focus on teacher development. Most of the Quality Co-ordinator's time is spent on efforts to improve teaching practices and preventing and managing issues.

It can be said that the RTC has implemented a combined approach of quality assurance coupled with quality control supported by TQM principles. For this to work, it requires the engagement of all of the members of the RTC in quality processes. The practices and procedures now in place, as outlined in this chapter, appear to be having a positive effect on the quality of teaching in the RTC. Feedback and initial results of the latest TQR show this to be the case.

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13

Learning assessment in *Ceibal en Inglés*

Silvia Rovegno

- Formative and summative assessment is taking place in Uruguay to measure the progress of students studying English and to help evaluate the effectiveness of *Ceibal en Inglés*.
- As it is implemented in levels 1 and 2, formative speaking assessment is considered time consuming and difficult by remote teachers.
- A new form of ongoing assessment, piloted in level 3, is showing promising results.

This chapter presents the results of interviews and analysis undertaken to examine the effectiveness of assessment tools used in *Ceibal en Inglés*. The challenges and limitations of learning assessment in the programme are also addressed.

Background

Assessment in English language teaching has been defined as “involving professional judgement based upon an image formed by the collection of information about student performance” (Tognolini and Stanley, 2011:25). Assessment can be *formative*, i.e. “for the purpose of improving learning,” and *summative*, i.e. “for monitoring and certificating performance or achievement” (ibid:25). Both of these types of assessment are found in *Ceibal en Inglés*. During the course of the year, formal and informal instances of formative assessment provide information to remote teachers (RTs) and classroom teachers (CTs) about student learning so adjustments can be made to teaching. At the end of each year, an annual summative assessment of the students’ English is undertaken using a nationwide online adaptive test.

Formative assessment of young learners

Young learner programmes around the world are becoming more common as part of compulsory primary education (Ioannou-Georgiou, in Powell-Davies, 2011:41), presenting a challenge around how to better assess the learning processes these learners go through. Children are in a state of “constant cognitive, social, emotional and physical growth” (McKay, 2006:6), which makes teaching them such a demanding task. Teaching methodologies and assessment need to be carefully aligned with the developmental characteristics of each age for learning and assessment to be effective.

It is not only growth that is the challenge. Children are also developing literacy in their mother tongue when a second language is introduced. However, the introduction of a second language is seen as favourable by some researchers: “Recent research findings indicate that access to two languages in early childhood can accelerate the development of both verbal and non-verbal abilities. There is also evidence of a positive association between bilingualism and both cognitive flexibility and divergent thinking” (Cummins, in McKay, 2006:7).

Another challenge children present is what some authors call a state of vulnerability: “At this age, children have a heightened sensitivity to praise, criticism and approval, and their self-esteem is strongly influenced by experiences at school” (ibid:14). Therefore, children need experiences that reinforce their self-concept and enhance their motivation to continue learning. This places a heavy burden on the assessment decisions to be taken in young learner programmes.

Ioannou-Georgiou (in Powell-Davies, 2011:44) believes that formative, classroom-based assessment is most suitable for young learner programmes. She states that these “programmes are at the beginning of a long process of language learning and expectations should be realistic and relevant to the age of the learners” and assessment should be “directly linked to what happens in the classroom and promoting self-reflection and self-assessment.” According to Ioannou-Georgiou and Pavlou (2003:5), the objectives of formative assessment should be “to monitor and aid children’s progress, to provide children with evidence of their progress to enhance motivation and to monitor performance and help teachers plan future work.”

It has also been proposed that young learner programmes should cover five areas to cater for the characteristics described in figure 1.

As a consequence of this, the author proposes five conditions for designing assessment in young learner programmes (ibid, 45-46):

- An assessment system should address all five areas of educational focus, not just the linguistic aspects.

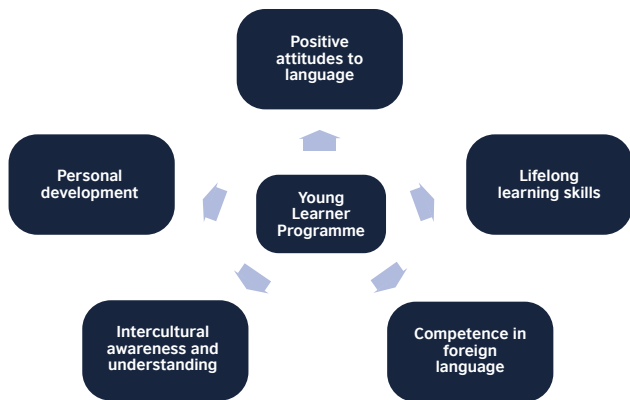


Figure 1: Focus areas of a young learner course (Ioannou-Georgiou, 2011:43)

- Tasks and assessment should be perceived as non-threatening by students.
- The tasks and assessment system should reflect the children’s particular developmental characteristics.
- The assessment should be criterion-referenced. That is to say, each student’s performance is contrasted against a learning standard and not compared to their peers.
- Assessment should involve multiple types and different tools.

Bailey (in Shohamy et al., 2017: 330) states that when designing assessment for young learners, three areas require specific attention: i) the format of the assessment, i.e. whether this will be individual, pair, group work or whole class; ii) choice of items and task types; and iii) the choice of contextualised age-appropriate stimuli.

Summative assessment

Summative assessment usually occurs at the end of term or year, when information is gathered about how much a student has learned and to report student achievement to others (McKay, 2006:22). Summative assessment of student learning in *Ceibal en Inglés* is a necessity in order to provide evidence of the programme’s effectiveness against its intended outcomes. Nikolov (2016:6) states that this “accountability in early language learning is not an unexpected phenomenon,” and mentions “stakeholders are interested in seeing results.”

Powell-Davies (2011:164) suggests that “developing an evidence base from which policy makers can make decisions” requires “a need to measure results” with “a focus on outcomes (what is achieved), outputs (what is being produced) and inputs (how the money is being used).”

Types of assessment tools

Tools for classroom-based assessment can take many different forms, from unstructured and informal to those which are more formal and structured, such as tests. Tognolini and Stanley (in Powell-Davies, 2011:26) propose the following continuum of assessment tools:

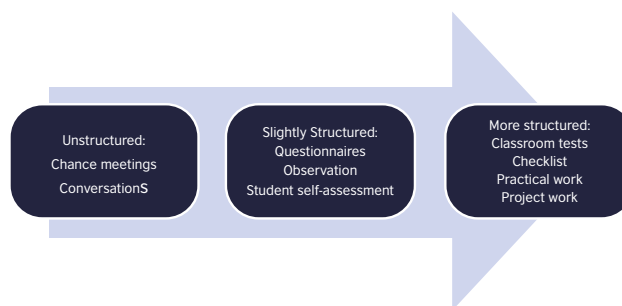


Figure 2: Assessment tools continuum (adapted from Tognolini and Stanley, 2011)

Ioannou-Georgiou and Pavlou (2003:13-14) propose a series of criteria to establish when a task becomes a useful assessment tool for young learners. These criteria are summarised in figure 3.

Criterion	Description
Aims	The assessment task is designed in such a way that the area to be assessed is clearly defined and isolated from other areas.
Measurable results	Assessment tasks produce measurable evidence of each individual child’s language development. After having carried out an assessment task, the teacher will know exactly what each child can or cannot do in terms of the predetermined aims of the activity.
Assessment criteria	Each assessment task specifies a set of criteria defining what the children should be able to do in order to demonstrate their grasp of the particular area assessed. The assessment criteria are expressed as actions through which the children demonstrate their ability/development.

Children's predisposition towards the activity	When children know they are going to be assessed, they will usually prepare beforehand, do their best during the assessment and take more notice of post-assessment feedback.
Timing	Assessment tasks are set at specific times during the learning process, usually at the end of a unit or after presentation and practice of specific language items or skills, so that the teacher can check the children's learning.
Children's participation	All children must have the chance to participate in the task so the teacher can gather information on the performance and ability of every child in the class.
Record keeping	Children's performance in an assessment task is recorded and kept on file. Additions or notes relevant to the children's performance in the assessment task can also be used when writing their profile.

Figure 3: Criteria for defining assessment tasks for young learners
(adapted from Iannou-Georgiou and Pavlou, 2003)

Approach to research

Research was undertaken in order to answer the following question:

In what ways is student learning on *Ceibal en Inglés* assessed?

An exploratory-descriptive approach was adopted in order to examine the evolution of assessment in

Ceibal en Inglés and to report on lessons learnt. Two different data collection methods were selected to enable this. Semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders were carried out. Based on the results of these interviews, key documents were identified and analysed. These documents represented primary sources of information for documentary research, as stated by Cohen et al (2007:193).

The following documents were analysed:

End of Year assessment	Results of Impact Test, 2013 (Plan Ceibal, 2014) Results of 2014 adaptive test (Plan Ceibal, 2015) Results of 2015 adaptive test (Plan Ceibal, 2016) Results of 2016 adaptive test (Plan Ceibal, 2017)
Lesson plans	2015 Assessment packs (Ceibal en Inglés, 2015) 2016 Assessment packs (Ceibal en Inglés, 2016) 2017 Assessment packs (Ceibal en Inglés, 2017)
Other assessment-related documents	Assessment tutorial (Ceibal en Inglés, 2017) Focus group for level 3 changes report 2016 (Ceibal en Inglés, 2016)

To complement this analysis, remote lessons were observed during June and July 2016 when an assessment was being undertaken by teachers.

End-of-year summative assessment

A review of the end-of-year summative assessment was undertaken and the following summary produced, charting the development of summative assessment in *Ceibal en Inglés*:

2013: Impact assessment (grammar and vocabulary) of *Ceibal en Inglés* primary

Time of assessment	July and December 2013
Objectives	To compare and contrast the results obtained by primary students (grades 4-6) with different time exposures to learning English via videoconferencing through <i>Ceibal en Inglés</i> .
Areas evaluated	Grammar and vocabulary via multiple choice questions Writing via a guided writing task
Results	There was a positive correlation between exposure to the programme and results obtained by students across socio-cultural levels

2014: Adaptive test (grammar, vocabulary and reading) for *Ceibal en Inglés* primary

Time of assessment	November-December 2014
Objectives	To assess the English of primary students (grades 4-6) learning English through videoconferencing (<i>Ceibal en Inglés</i>) in 2014 and evaluate progress since 2013
Areas evaluated	Grammar and vocabulary via multiple choice questions Reading via multiple choice questions Writing via guided writing task
Results	43 per cent of <i>Ceibal en Inglés</i> students were marked as having an A2 level of English, according to the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001); 56 per cent were marked as having an A1 level

2015: Adaptive test (with listening) for *Ceibal en Inglés* and *face-to-face* programmes

Time of assessment	November 2015
Objectives	To assess learning of English of primary students (grades 4-6) studying via videoconferencing on <i>Ceibal en Inglés</i> or with <i>face-to-face</i> lessons (<i>Segundas Lenguas</i>) and evaluate progress To compare the results between <i>Ceibal en inglés</i> and the <i>Segundas Lenguas</i> <i>face-to-face</i> programme To report on student learning in primary for secondary education authorities
Areas evaluated	Grammar and vocabulary via multiple choice questions Reading via multiple choice questions Writing via guided writing task Listening via multiple choice questions
Results	Similar results were obtained by students in <i>Ceibal en inglés</i> to those enrolled in the <i>Segundas Lenguas</i> programme: 66 per cent of students in grade 6 were marked as having an A2 level of language in vocabulary, grammar and reading; while 40 per cent in listening and 12 per cent in writing were marked as A2 for both programmes

2016: Adaptive test for primary (years 4-6) and secondary (year 1)

Time of assessment	November 2016
Objectives	<p>To assess the level of English proficiency attained by students in years 4, 5 and 6 of primary education (both in face-to-face and videoconference lessons) and in year 1 of secondary education</p> <p>To ensure continuity of the assessment implemented in 2014 and to identify the year-on-year progress in students' learning process</p> <p>To inform secondary education of the levels of proficiency achieved by the students who graduate from primary school in order to foster continuity in the learning process throughout the school journey</p> <p>To provide students who sit for the test with a certificate that attests the results obtained (Plan Ceibal, 2016:3)</p>
Areas evaluated	<p>Grammar and vocabulary via multiple choice questions</p> <p>Reading via multiple choice questions</p> <p>Writing via guided writing task</p> <p>Listening via multiple choice questions</p>
Results	<p>62 per cent of students enrolled in <i>Ceibal en Inglés</i> were marked with an A2 level of language in vocabulary, grammar and writing compared to 55 per cent in the <i>Segundas Lenguas</i> programme</p> <p>37 per cent of students in both programmes were marked as having an A2 level in listening</p> <p>19 per cent of <i>Ceibal en Inglés</i> students were marked as having an A2 level in writing contrasting with 21 per cent at A2 in the <i>Segundas Lenguas</i> programme</p> <p>"When analysing the development of results in the different editions of the test, substantial year-on-year progress is observed" (Plan Ceibal, 2016: 17)</p>

One of the outcomes of the tests outlined above is evidence of the impact remote teaching has had on the learning of English. The results obtained by students enrolled in *Ceibal en Inglés* are equivalent to those receiving face-to-face English language instruction, demonstrating the effectiveness of remote teaching as an alternative form of instruction. Further details and analysis of the results of the end-of-year assessment can be found in a separate chapter in this publication.

Formative continuous assessment of speaking in *Ceibal en Inglés*

Formal assessment of speaking is carried out by the RT twice a year. This assessment is planned in the curriculum and referred to as *assessment weeks*. The first is held after approximately 11–12 weeks of lessons. In 2017 changes to level 3 materials were made and the assessment at this level was changed

to place more focus on project work. According to the 2017 Assessment tutorial, assessment weeks have as an objective "to check what students can produce and understand when some topics and language points are integrated." This assessment is formative: "Grades are exclusively for assessing students' progress and performance. The result of the assessment will impact on the learning objectives, since both teachers will reflect on the results and adapt objectives, lesson plans and materials if/where necessary."

Review of assessment in levels 1 and 2

What follows is a description of the structure of the above-mentioned continuous speaking assessment as it currently stands in levels 1 and 2 (grades 4 and 5) of *Ceibal en Inglés*, and analysis of the assessment tasks against the criteria set out by Iannou-Georgiou and Pavlou described previously.

Each assessment week asks students to create a poster (text and image), which they need to upload to *Crea* (the learning management system) for the remote teacher to assess prior to the oral assessment. This means the written work of each student will be assessed before their oral presentation during the remote lesson. For each assessment week a clear and detailed focus is provided in the lesson plans for both RTs and CTs to access. As an example, this is the summary of the first assessment task students tackle:

Level	Week	Topic	Task
1	12	My pet	Produce a poster with a drawing and description of your pet in five sentences. Areas to be included in the description: type of pet, colour, description of body, abilities and pet's home.
Testing focus			

Grammar

Is your pet a ...? (recognition)

Is your pet ... (colour)/(size) ...? (recognition)

Can your pet ... (action)? (recognition)

My pet/It has got ... (number) ... (singular/plural part of the body) (production)

My pet/It can ... (action) (production)

Yes, it is/No, it isn't (production)

Yes, it can/No, it can't (production)

It has got a (big) head, two (long) (white) ears, a (short) (red) nose, two (big) (brown) eyes, four (short) legs and a (long) (white) tail (production)

Vocabulary

Pets: dog, cat, hamster, mouse, turtle, budgie, snake, rabbit, goldfish, lizard, parrot

Colours: blue, red, yellow, green, purple, black, white, brown, orange, pink, grey

Adjectives: big/small; long/short

Numbers: one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, nineteen, twenty

Parts of the body: body, head, eye(s), ear(s), mouth, nose, leg(s), tail

Actions: run, skip, hop, sing, jump, swim, fly, climb, swing

Pet homes: kennel, box, cage, bowl, basket, bed, tank

The British Council Argentina Quality Manager explained: "By the time students get to the assessment week, they have been working with the linguistic aims for months, so they are able to produce language, and you can easily assess this." Students do these projects in pairs and present them orally during the remote lesson. The way RTs conduct the assessment varies during the year. During the first assessment week in both levels, the students work on a project, then the RT asks questions to each student related to their project. In the second assessment week, students are encouraged to speak more in pairs, and they ask questions to each other.

In the following table, the sample assessment tasks are analysed against the criteria set out by Iannou-Georgiou and Pavlou (2003:13-14).

According to the criteria proposed by Iannou-Georgiou and Pavlou, the tasks used for assessment in *Ceibal en Inglés* are appropriate for a young learner programme. Students also have a chance to self-assess their work via a survey in *Crea*, and can "award themselves different grades such as *Excellent, Very Good, Good or Keep Trying*" (Assessment tutorial 2017:1).

The dynamics of these assessment weeks pose a time challenge for RTs. One Teacher Co-ordinator from British Council Uruguay explained: "Not all kids upload their projects on time to *Crea* for you to check. The greatest difficulty we face is time. Remote teachers have 45-minute lessons. Considering that each project takes about five minutes to present, plus organisation time, each assessment cycle takes two weeks to complete at the least."

This was noted during observations of RTs carrying out assessments. On average, the RTs observed were able to complete five projects per lesson. In most observations, CTs had not previously selected the students to present and it fell on the RT to appoint the students to present, who in most cases were reluctant to do so, which required both teachers to convince students to participate. One RT said that assessments can sometimes take longer than two weeks: "At worst, it can take a whole month, because the groups in some parts of the country are large, with over 27 students each".

Reducing the time taken for assessment and associated issues is an ongoing challenge for the project. Of this, the Lead Quality Manager said: "We

Criterion	Description
Aims	Lesson plans for both RTs and CTs clearly state the aims of the assessment as well as the testing focus in terms of grammar and vocabulary.
Measurable results	Frameworks are designed clearly and suggested procedure included, ensuring fairness across the programme and eliciting specific language from students in the form of a project presentation.
Assessment criteria	Assessment criteria are defined for both speaking and writing tasks.
Children's predisposition towards the activity	Children participating in the programme are informed of the assessment weeks and the work done in the previous weeks builds on these assessment instances. Feedback is offered via <i>Crea</i> in the form of stars for each of the criteria set.
Timing	Set specifically at mid-term and end-of-term for levels 1 and 2.
Children's participation	All children prepare their projects and present them during the remote lesson.
Record keeping	Remote teachers record their marks in <i>Crea</i> , which can be accessed by RTs, CTs and the students. This information is erased from the system once the academic year comes to an end.

noticed that the students came, I wouldn't say unprepared, most of the time, but they did come with high expectations, levels of anxiety such that sometimes the students cried or refused to sit for the test or refused to speak in front of the camera." This, he reported, was the reason behind the changes that have been made to assessment in level 3.

Review of assessment in level 3

Based on feedback from remote teachers, classroom teachers and other stakeholders (as mentioned above), a new form of evaluation for level 3 was designed in 2017, taking advantage of major changes to the lesson plans and materials that were made to the level. Speaking assessment was changed so that it is not limited to twice a year, but is carried out each remote lesson. The students have a weekly project to work on, completing the written part in lessons B and C or for homework, and each week two students are asked to present their work during the following remote lesson.

Because of this, two of the issues of concern reported during assessment weeks for levels 1 and 2 (the time required and student selection) seem to be avoided. The Lead Quality Manager stated: *"We have heard lots of good comments about this ongoing assessment for level 3 and have received positive comments both from the remote teaching providers and the remote teachers about the students' performance."*

Conclusions

Ceibal en Inglés has implemented both summative and formative assessment in order to assess student

learning. The annual adaptive summative test allows stakeholders to evaluate the effectiveness of this form of teaching. The results are promising and indicate that remote teaching is a suitable alternative to traditional face-to-face teaching. Students in both programmes obtain similar results in most areas across the years and across socio-economic contexts.

The experience of formative in-course assessment has led to changes being made to the *Ceibal en Inglés* programme, with adaptations being made to lesson plans with a view to improving the learning experience and outcomes. This formative assessment, however, has proven to be more challenging to implement effectively. Though the tasks introduced in the programme seem suitable as assessment tools for a young learner English programme, the dynamics of carrying out that assessment have resulted in issues for both CTs and RTs, although progress is being made with a new system of speaking assessment for level 3 classes.

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How evaluation and assessment are intrinsic to *Ceibal en Inglés*

Cecilia Marconi and Claudia Brovetto

- There is a culture of evaluation in *Ceibal en Inglés*, with research, continuous monitoring and evaluation used to improve teaching and learning
- An impact test in 2013 showed a positive relationship between the time of participation in the programme and English learning outcomes
- The subsequent standardised computer adaptive test for the assessment of English language learning has shown that students taught via videoconferencing and with a face-to-face teacher learn at a similar rate
- The results of the annual test indicate there is a progressive reduction of the social gap in learning outcomes between critical and non-critical context schools

This chapter presents the evaluation and research agenda of *Ceibal en Inglés*, discusses the results achieved in the years 2013 to 2016, and outlines the plans for further research in the future.

Background

Ceibal en Inglés combines pedagogy and technology in a unique way, initiated to make up for a shortage of teachers, with the goal of providing equal opportunities for English language learning at the primary school level in Uruguay. An innovative way of teaching has been implemented, based on collaborative work between a remote teacher of English and a local school teacher (for a description, see Kaplan and Brovetto, in this volume). Since its origin in 2012, *Ceibal en Inglés* has included a detailed plan for monitoring an evaluation as an intrinsic component. At the beginning, the interest was to determine if the design of the Primary English project was valid and resulted in learning on the part of the students. In order to do so, an impact test was designed and implemented. This first stage was followed by further continuous assessment of the students' learning, as well as a series of inquiries taking a more qualitative perspective, including surveys of teachers and lesson observations.

The purpose of assessment

The primary purpose of educational assessment is to determine what students know, understand and can do (Barber and Hill, 2014). One of the strengths of *Ceibal en Inglés* is to consider assessment as part of the ongoing process of learning and teaching. Assessment is necessary in order to better inform educational policy and improve the management of educational systems, while assessment is also an instrument for collaboration and continuous learning within them (Ravella et al., 2008). In particular, because of the innovative character of *Ceibal en Inglés*, the need for learning about its impact required special attention, as the unique design includes a remote teacher of English through videoconference, plus the participation of a non-English-speaking classroom teacher.

One of the innovative components of *Ceibal en Inglés* is the relationship between technology and language pedagogy and, in particular, technology-mediated interaction. Another innovative aspect is related to the classroom teacher's role. In *Ceibal en Inglés*, the classroom teacher – a native Spanish speaker with limited or no proficiency in English – is the activator and the learning enabler (see Brovetto, 2017, and Kaplan and Brovetto, in this volume).

Continuous monitoring and evaluation are required for improvement in the implementation of large-scale educational systems. Both diagnostic and formative assessment is as important as the development of research on the factors that affect learning. In the case of Uruguay, a standardised test for the assessment of English language learning was developed and implemented, followed and enriched by the development of research in this field. For these purposes, the joint efforts of the *Ceibal en Inglés* management and academic teams has been fundamental. In particular, the findings presented in this chapter show results of a research programme that involves the participation of representatives of *La Administración Nacional de Educación Pública (ANEP)*, the National Public Education System Administration; Plan Ceibal specialists; the

administrators of the programme; researchers; and independent technical consultants. This research programme demonstrates that there is a *culture of evaluation* that contributes to accumulative technical capacity.

Two modalities of English teaching in Uruguay: face-to-face and blended

English has been taught in primary schools in Uruguay since the 1990s. Currently, there is a face-to-face programme (*Segundas Lenguas*), run by the *Departamento de Segundas Lenguas y Lenguas Extranjeras CEIP (Consejo de Educación Inicial y Primaria)*. This programme works with teachers of English with diverse backgrounds and includes groups from pre-school to 6th grade. The number of hours dedicated to English varies depending on the grade: from pre-school to 3rd grade it is two hours per week, which increases to three hours per week from 4th to 6th grade.

In 2008, the teaching of English was included in the national curriculum as a mandatory subject, but a lack of English teachers meant the possibilities of expanding the face-to-face programme were limited. As a way of compensating for this, *Plan Ceibal* and *ANEP* designed and implemented a blended programme that combines the participation of a *remote teacher* (RT) of English (i.e. through videoconference, with teachers located both in Uruguay and abroad), and the local classroom teacher (CT). Since 2013, both programmes have worked together and now cover almost all urban schools in the country. In 2017, *Ceibal en Inglés* was present in 537 schools, and the face-to-face programme in 317 schools, together reaching 95 per cent of the urban school population of 4th to 6th grades within three years. This rapid expansion was only made possible through the use of technology in the service of pedagogy.

Both *Ceibal en Inglés* and *Segundas Lenguas* allocate three lessons per week to English teaching. The design, content and methodology, however, are quite different. While in *Segundas Lenguas* there are three one-hour lessons facilitated by a face-to-face teacher of English, *Ceibal en Inglés* lessons are 45 minutes long and involve one weekly lesson conducted by a remote teacher of English via videoconference, while the other two lessons are facilitated by the classroom teacher with limited knowledge of English. In spite of these differences, and as will be shown in this chapter, the results show that children in both educational programmes are learning English at a similar rate. This is a positive result for *Ceibal en Inglés* because it shows that the mediation of technology does not have a negative impact on students' learning.

In terms of expected results, both programmes have established similar goals. By the end of the primary

school cycle (6th grade) children are expected to reach level A2 (Elementary) of the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001).

The remainder of this chapter is structured as follows: the general comprehensive plan of monitoring and evaluation of *Ceibal en Inglés* will be presented, followed by the design and results of the first period of the programme's evaluation plan, the impact evaluation, the development of the adaptive test and the continuous implementation of the past three years. Finally, we will briefly describe ongoing and further research.

Evaluation and research agenda 2013–Present

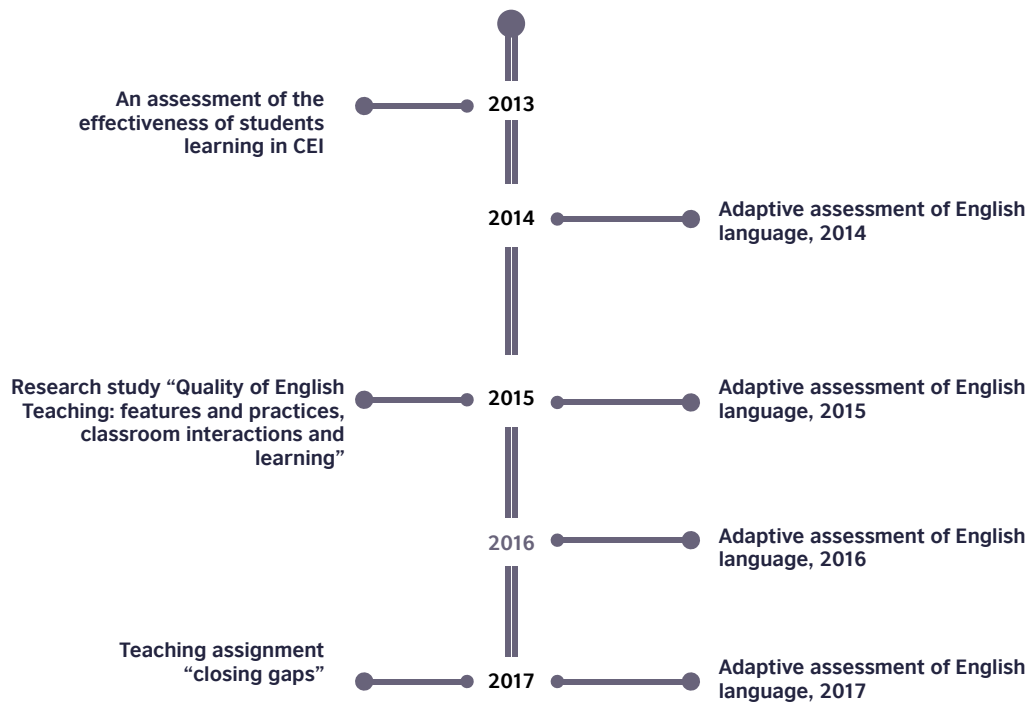
Having a research and evaluation agenda generates valuable information for the programme and the community. It contributes to the building of a culture of evaluation and constitutes a precedent for the Uruguayan educational system of policies based on evidence. The research agenda in the past four years has allowed the programme to build a bank of information based upon students' assessment results, which forms part of a continuous plan of improvement.

The studies and evaluations carried out by the programme have been organised in two phases. The first phase (2013–15) focused on exploring whether the programme was reaching its goals. The second phase started in 2015 and continues to the present. Its goal is to generate information to improve the quality of the programme and contribute to closing any social gaps in learning.

The chart below presents the research plan of *Ceibal en Inglés* since its beginning in 2013. As shown, the plan includes both assessment of learning on the part of the students, and research studies on the pedagogical practices.

In 2013 an initial evaluation was designed with the goal of generating evidence about the relationship between the time of exposure to English teaching through *Ceibal en Inglés* and the students' learning. The study analysed the results of a sample of 7,700 students from the 4th, 5th, and 6th grades of public primary schools in Uruguay (Goyeneche et al., 2014). The goal was to design an impact evaluation with the classic comparison of two matched groups with different exposure to the programme. The sample was selected based on the progressive coverage of the programme during 2013 (see Kaplan and Brovetto, in this volume). The method involved comparing the English learning of two groups of students with different times of exposure: one group of students who started English lessons in March 2013 (Group 1); and one group of students who started English lessons in July 2013 (Group 2). Both groups took two equivalent multiple choice English

Evaluation agenda 2013-2017



online tests at two different times. The first test was applied in July 2013 (t0) and the second test in December 2013 (t1). The tests included 40 questions of vocabulary, grammar and reading in English and an assessment of writing. In t0 the students from Group 1 had one semester of exposure, while the students from Group 2 had only three weeks of exposure. To study the impact of the programme, a comparative analysis between the performance of the two groups was conducted, controlling for socio-cultural context and grade. The study excluded from the analysis students who had stated they studied English outside school.

The findings based on the comparative analysis showed evidence of the existence of a positive relationship between the time of participation in the programme and English learning outcomes. Students obtained better performance in the test after one semester of English lessons. It was found that a student who attended a semester of English lessons was 6.1 test points (out of a total of 40 points) in the vocabulary, grammar and reading test above a student without exposure to the programme. In the written test, a student in the programme obtained a result of 1.2 test points (out of a total of 5 points) higher than a student who was not in the programme (Goyeneche et al., 2014).

Development of a computer adaptive English test 2014–16

The implementation of a standardised proficiency test at a national level provides a wealth of relevant information to administrators and other stakeholders. The value of a standardised test relies on the fact

that it offers precise information on the level of learning of potentially large populations of students. Thus, data can be analysed considering the degree of equity or inequity in students' achievement depending on their social context, and the evolution of students' performance over the years (Ravella et al., 2008). In this sense, it is crucial that this type of test is repeated regularly over time, supported by a solid institutional agreement that ensures continuity and technical quality to overcome the diverse pedagogical, political and technical challenges that large-scale implementation and administration of a national test implies.

In the case of the computer adaptive test (CAT) in Uruguay, the challenges presented above were taken into account. The test was developed in 2014 and has been regularly implemented and improved on in the following years. Since 2014, the test has been administered at the end of the school year, on the basis of an agreement between ANEP, *Plan Ceibal*, and the British Council (Plan Ceibal et al., 2014, 2015, 2016). The CAT is given to all primary state school children in 4th, 5th and 6th grades that learn English in one of the two modalities present in public schools: *Ceibal en Inglés* and *Segundas Lenguas* (see previous section, and Kaplan and Brovetto, in this volume).

A CAT is a form of personalised computer-based test, "which matches the level of difficulty of the items with the test taker's provided responses" and "the correct or false response of the test taker to an item alters the difficulty of the next item which s/he receives" (Coombe, 2018). Its advantages lie in homogenising the conditions of application and establishing controls to preserve the security of the

test, achieving a rapid processing of the data, among others (Olea and Ponsoda, 2003).

Performance levels were designed in accordance with the standards defined by the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001). The Uruguayan CAT is an assessment tool that adjusts to the students' level of English. Learners are asked to respond to a question and, depending on the accuracy of their answers, they are presented with either a more difficult or an easier question. This adaptive evaluation was felt to be a useful tool for assessing large populations of students with a potential wide range of language proficiency (Plan Ceibal et al., 2015).

In its first edition in November 2014, the CAT included one multiple choice component with items assessing vocabulary, reading and grammar (VRG), and a non-adaptive test of writing. In 2015, a listening comprehension module was incorporated in the test, also adaptive. The writing test included semi-closed and open questions to be answered online. The VRG and listening components were corrected automatically; the writing component was corrected by a group of trained teachers.

The assessment had the following main objectives:

1. To assess the knowledge of English language of students of 4th, 5th and 6th grades in the two teaching modalities present in primary schools

2. To provide students with a certificate of the level obtained

3. To build a permanent assessment plan that enables the administrators to follow the annual progress of English language learning of this population of students

4. To build an information system for the continuity of the linguistic policies between primary and secondary education

In secondary education, English language is a compulsory subject, so it is crucial for the educational system to know the English level primary school students have when they start secondary school (Plan Ceibal et al., 2014).

The adaptive test is now taken by thousands of students every year. The following tables show the number and percentage of students that took the test in the three years 2014–16. The number of students in each of the two English teaching modalities present in the system (*Ceibal en Inglés* and *Segundas Lenguas*) are shown. The analysis of the population that took the test shows that the group is balanced in terms of grade (4th, 5th and 6th) and socio-cultural background.

Table 1: Adaptive English Evaluation applied 2014–16

	2014		2015		2016	
	Students	Coverage	Students	Coverage	Students	Coverage
Ceibal en Inglés						
VRG	30,196	60 per cent	46,672	61 per cent	44,389	55 per cent
Listening	NA		35,302	46 per cent	36,171	45 per cent
Writing	5,468	11 per cent	33,305	43 per cent	36,070	45 per cent
Segundas Lenguas						
VRG	18,497	65 per cent	19,027	66 per cent	21,052	72 per cent
Listening	NA		13,810	48 per cent	17,732	61 per cent
Writing	6,057	21 per cent	14,868	51 per cent	18,481	63 per cent
Total						
VRG	48,693	62 per cent	65,699	62 per cent	65,441	60 per cent
Listening	NA		49,112	46 per cent	53,903	49 per cent
Writing	11,525	15 per cent	48,173	45 per cent	54,551	50 per cent

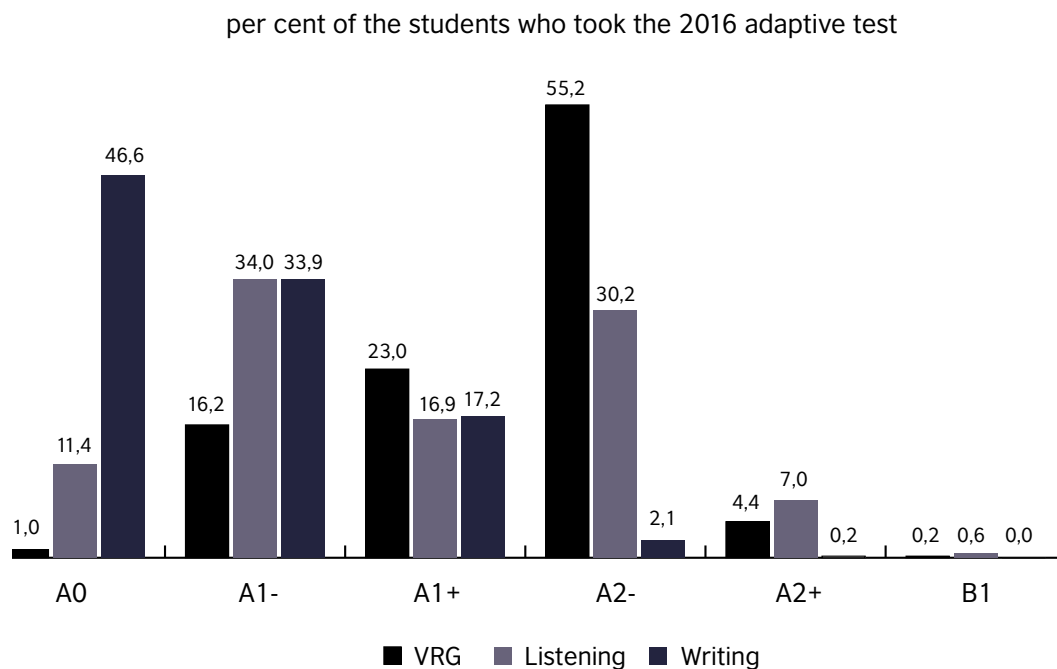
NA: not applied

Global Results: 2016

In this section we present the results obtained in the 2016 edition of the adaptive test. First, the global results obtained by students of both programmes (*Ceibal en Inglés* and *Segundas Lenguas*) are presented (Graph 1). Then, the data is analysed comparatively by programme, school grade and socio-cultural background.

The population of students that took the test is large and diverse in background, and differs depending on the English programme they participate in, the school grade and the socio-cultural context. These different variables and the potential impact in the results are analysed and presented.

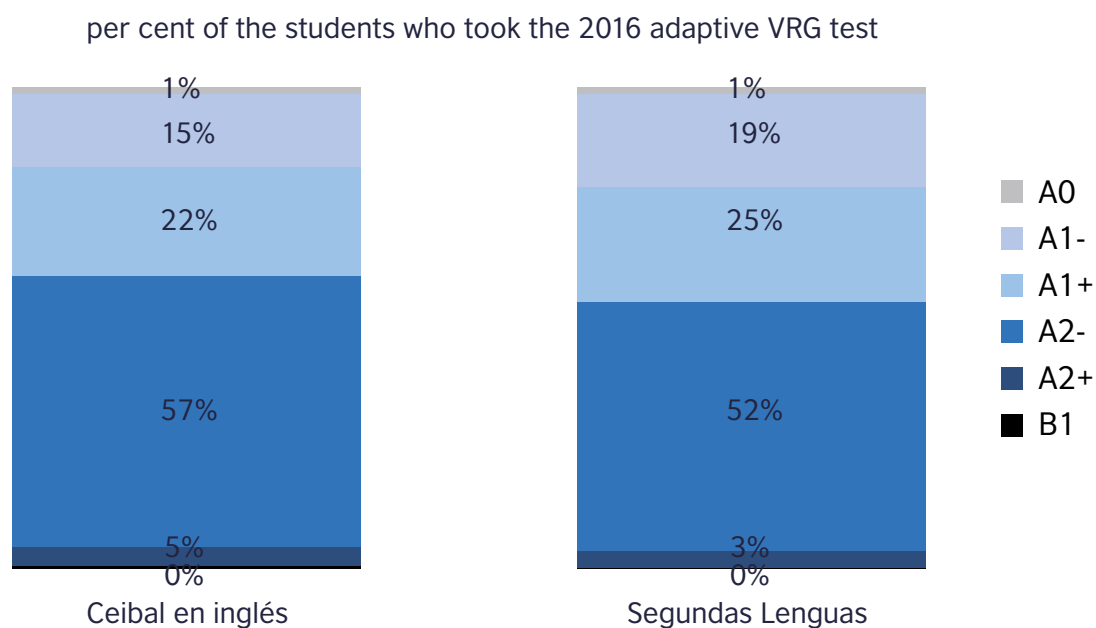
Graph 1: Students' performance in adaptive test (primary school)



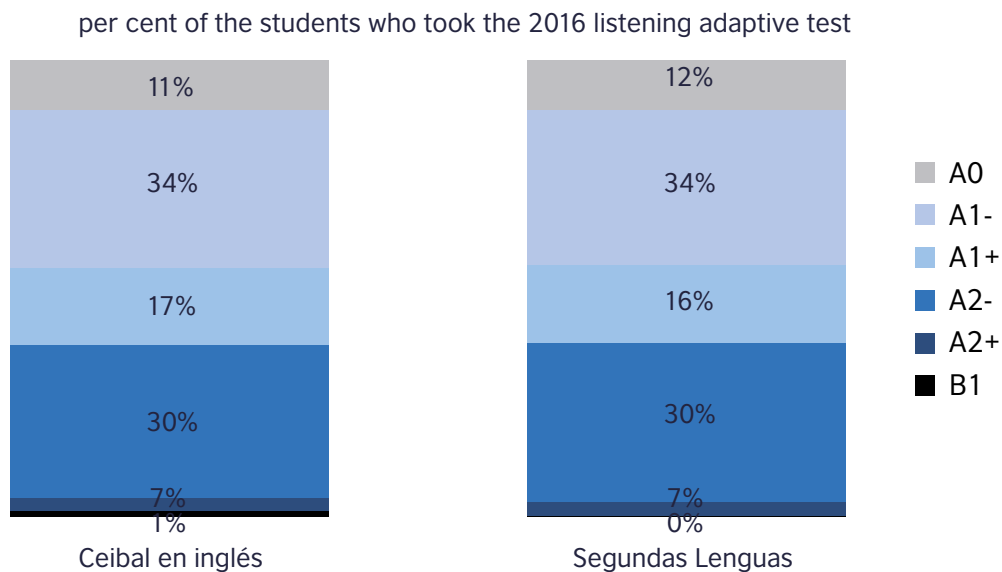
At the end of school year 2016, the test results showed that 59.4 per cent of students reached an A2 level in the VRG test and 37.7 per cent reached A2 in the listening component. The weakest component

was writing. If we consider the results by programme (*Ceibal en Inglés* and *Segundas Lenguas*), it is clear that the results are very similar in the three components of the test (Graphs 2 to 4).

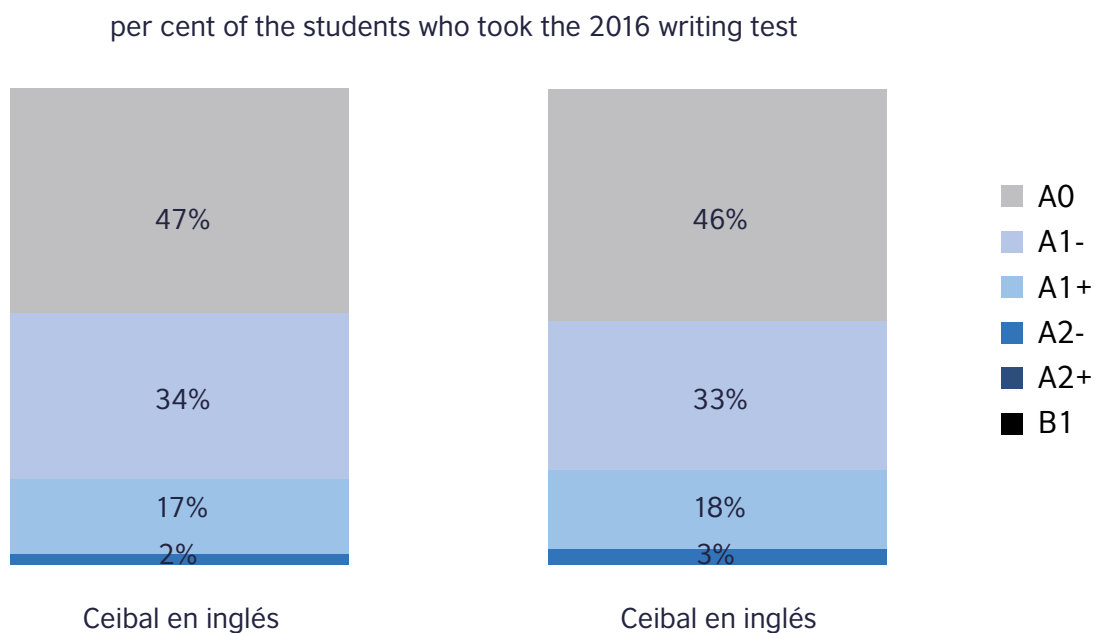
Graph 2: Students' performance in VRG adaptive test by programme in 2016 (primary school)



Graph 3: Students' performance in listening adaptive test by programme in 2016 (primary school)



Graph 4: Students' performance in writing test by programme in 2016 (primary school)

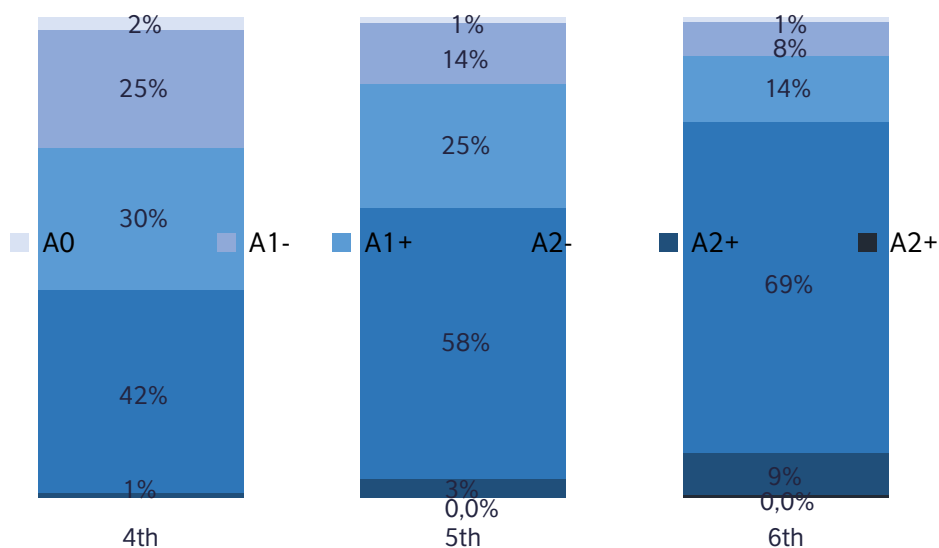


The fact that students in both programmes reach similar results is important in two main ways. First, it shows evidence that *Ceibal en Inglés* is a valid method for teaching a foreign language that is comparable to face-to-face teaching. Second, it constitutes a good result in terms of equity, since children in both programmes have similar opportunities to learn.

The following analysis focuses on *Ceibal en Inglés* results only. Graph 5 shows the distribution of the results of *Ceibal en Inglés* students in the VRG test analysed by school grade.

Graph 5: Ceibal en Inglés students' performance in VRG adaptive test by grade level in 2016 (primary schools)

per cent of the Ceibal en Inglés students who took the 2016 adaptive VRG test



The data shows that 78 per cent of the students of Ceibal en Inglés leave primary education with A2- or A2+ in Vocabulary-Reading-Grammar. This result is consistent and promising in terms of what is expected.

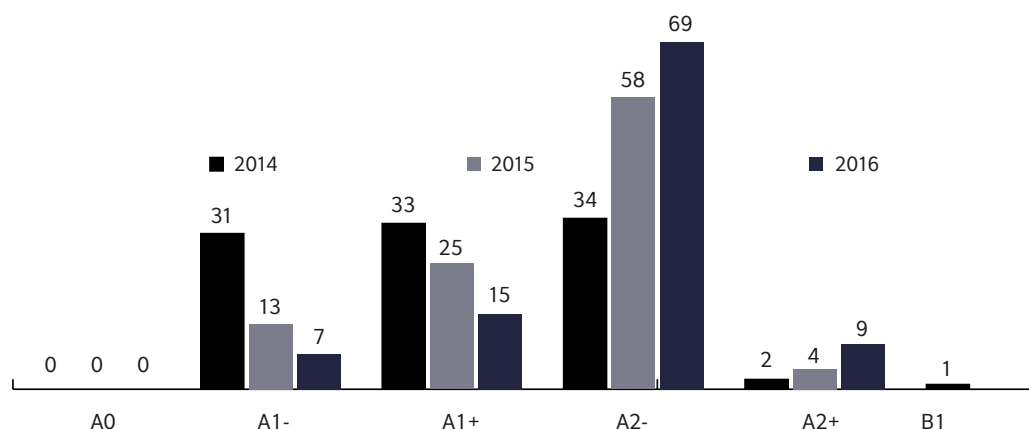
Evolution of results in the period 2014–16

A stable system of evaluations allows for annual comparisons of results, which are of great value when assessing the progress of a specific population along the years. There is a group of students that took the adaptive test three consecutive years, thus providing data in the shape of a micro-panel, which offers a robust methodology for analysis and the possibility of

analysing learning pathways, among others. The group that took the test in 2014, 2015 and 2016 comprises 10,309 students. The following analysis focuses on the 6,111 students from this group that participated in Ceibal en Inglés. In this group, there are 4,798 who took the tests in 4th, 5th and 6th grade of primary school, and 1,313 who took the tests in the 5th and 6th grades of primary and 1st grade middle school. The group is balanced in terms of socio-cultural background. The socio-cultural context is determined by the educational system (see methodology in DIEE, 2016). In what follows we present the annual achievements in English language learning of this micro-panel (Graph 6).

Graph 6: Development of results (2014–16) in students' performance in VRG adaptive test

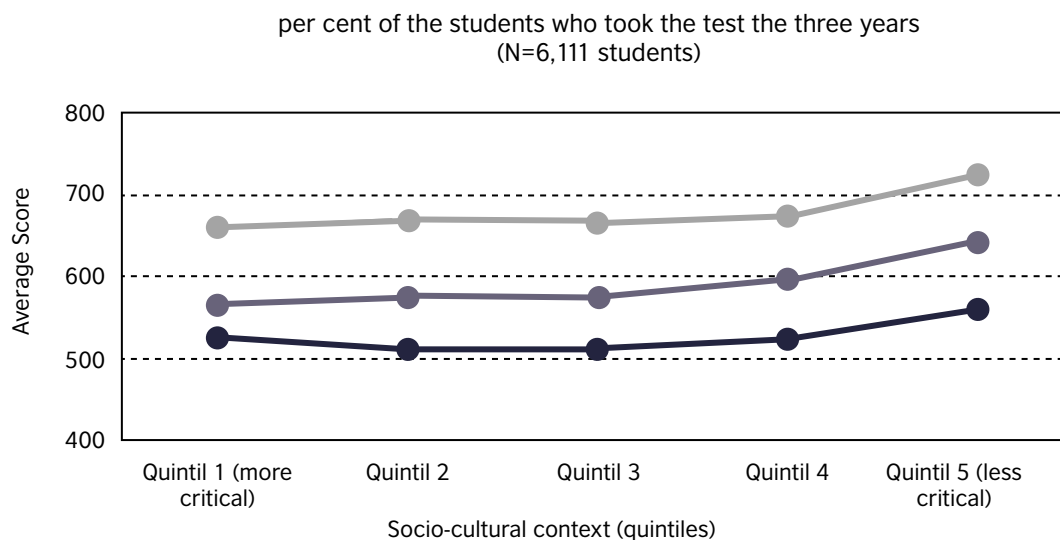
per cent of the students who took the test the three years (N=6,111 students)



The graph shows the increasing number of students who reach A2 over the years. In 2014 the mean global score in the VRG test was estimated at 530 points, which rose to 601 in 2015 and 689 points in 2016.

Given the impact of socio-cultural context on the academic results in Uruguay in general, and in previous editions of the adaptive English test in particular (*Plan Ceibal* et al., 2014), it is relevant to analyse the data of this panel and the annual progress by context.

Graph 7: Development of results (2014–16) in students' performance in VRG adaptive test according to socio-cultural context



If we consider exclusively the group of *Ceibal en Inglés* students that took the tests in 2014, 2015 and 2016 when they were in 4th to 6th grades primary, and who declared that they did not study English outside school (3,603 students), the results show that 79 per cent of students in the most critical contexts reach A2, while 87 per cent of the students in the less critical contexts reach A2.

Graph 7 shows once again that student progress is observed in all socio-cultural levels over the years. But it also shows that there are different rates of growth in the extremes of the distribution. In quintile 5 (less critical context) the annual result is rather stable. However, in quintile 1 (most critical context) the results show a significant improvement after the second year, which could indicate a progressive reduction of the social gap. Future studies and continuous evaluation will allow confirmation of this tendency.

Speaking assessment

Ceibal en Inglés future plans include the assessment of oral production. This skill is probably the hardest to evaluate on a large scale. *Ceibal en Inglés* is exploring and testing different tools that use digital technology in order to evaluate speaking. The research programme includes piloting different platforms and contrasting this with traditional face-to-face oral evaluation to validate the results.

Ongoing and further research

As presented in this chapter, the research agenda of *Ceibal en Inglés* has evolved through different phases, following the evolution of the programme. Other interests of the team include new areas, such as learning analytics and data mining, and qualitative studies of the quality of teaching, the potential impact of teachers' characteristics and practices on the learning of students.

Learning analytics is the measurement, collection, analysis and reporting of data about learners and their contexts, for the purposes of understanding and optimising learning and the environments in which it occurs (Siemens et al., 2011). During the last decades, the potential of analytics and data mining (methodologies that extract useful and actionable information from large datasets) has transformed one field of scientific inquiry after another (Baker and Siemens, 2014).

Because of the blended design, *Ceibal en Inglés*, allows for innovative ways of exploring the relationship between technology and language pedagogy and, in particular, technology-mediated interaction. One of the ongoing research projects is to explore the effect of the use of certain digital tools, such as the role of the Learning Management System of Plan Ceibal (*Crea*) on learning, to analyse

the extent the use of this technology contributes in enhancing the learning outcomes of students.

An independent line of research relates to the study of the quality of teaching and its impact on learning. The aim of this study is to explore the characteristics (background education, years of experience, among other factors) and teaching practices associated with good results in student learning. The research is based on the random assignment of remote institutes and teachers to groups of students, as well as the design and application of class observation guidelines, which has allowed the analysis of the interactions that occur in the classroom among the different actors.

Initial results, based on the added-value models, indicate that different remote teachers, have differing degrees of effectiveness. Additionally, the factors associated with the learning were analysed, finding that the observable characteristics of the teachers are weakly related to the teaching quality mediated through the performance of their students. Finally, evidence was found that the practices analysed in the observation account, in part, for the effectiveness of the remote teachers (Marconi et al., 2017). This line of study will allow further identification of good practices and shape future plans for continuous development of teachers working in Ceibal en Inglés.

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15

Remote English teacher action research

Silvia Rovegno

Introduction

This case study describes two action research projects undertaken by remote teachers (RTs) from Uruguay participating in the English Teachers Action Research (ETAR) scheme conducted in 2016–17. ETAR used the exploratory action research methodology set out by Smith and Rebolledo, with action research being used “to explore, understand and improve our practices as teachers” (Smith and Rebolledo, 2018:20) and occurring “when exploratory research is followed by action research” (ibid:25). In this scheme, each participating teacher was appointed a mentor who guided and supported their work while the teacher-researchers explored their own practices and designed interventions to examine aspects of their teaching contexts.

Action research and teacher development

Action research is a strategy for continuous professional development (CPD) that allows teachers to bridge the gap between understanding and engagement. Dikilitas (2015:49) defines teacher research as “a form of research conducted by classroom teachers to investigate an issue they identify and reach some conclusions for themselves that can be constantly revised, improved and changed.”

The teacher takes the role of the researcher, either alone or with the help of others, and the research is a self-initiated process exploring “problematic issues or ‘puzzles’ as well as successes in their practice” (Smith, Rebolledo, and Connelly, 2014:111).

Case 1: Developing writing in the remote lesson

Estela Maris Quintana and María Irene Vilas, mentored by Silvia Rovegno

After a year working as RTs, the teacher-researchers felt that writing was an area in remote teaching that required more attention, mainly because most of the writing tasks were designed to be done without the guidance of an RT. Writing activities are either done in lessons B and C (the support lessons that follow the videoconferencing lesson A), or set for homework. RTs would then correct them.

The reasons why this was less than ideal were:

- As no time was spent practising writing in lesson A (the videoconferencing lesson), students did not have a chance to develop their writing skills with the guidance of the RT.
- Not all students did homework that was assigned.
- If students were asked to complete writing tasks in *Crea*, the learning management system (LMS), they needed to each have a working laptop. In theory, each student has one, but in practice this was sometimes not the case.
- When writing was done in lessons B and C and students did not have laptops with them, they would complete the work in notebooks, which meant RTs could not access the writing to correct the work.
- Even when students did their homework in *Crea*, they rarely revisited it after it was corrected to learn from their mistakes.

Planning action research

Because of the above, the teacher-researchers decided to conduct action research in order to identify ways that their students’ writing skills might be improved, taking into account the particularities of their teaching and learning context.

The first steps taken by the teacher-researchers were:

- Sharing their experience with each other and taking notes about their classes.
- Interviewing the classroom teachers (CTs) working with them to collect examples of how writing was taught in Spanish at school, and to investigate the students’ performance in their own language.
- Analysing the writing activities done by the students in Spanish.
- Reading comments and suggestions by *Ceibal en Inglés* Quality Managers who had observed lessons.

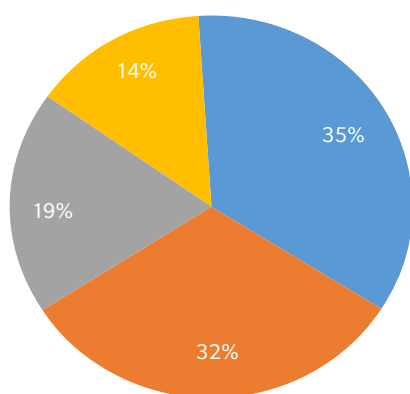
- Collecting ideas from articles and book chapters of ELT literature related to writing.
- Reflecting on ways writing in the lesson plans could be adapted.

Lesson plan analysis

An analysis of level 1 lesson plans showed the following task types:

In level 1 (aimed at 4th grade students, aged nine) the writing tasks were:

- Complete the sentence
- Writing following a model
- Picture dictionary entry creation
- Other



- Sentence completion (35 per cent) tasks
- Writing entries for a class picture dictionary (32 per cent)
- Writing practice following a supplied model
- Copying text the teacher writes
- Labeling
- Note-taking

An analysis of level 2 lesson plans (written for 5th grade students, aged ten) showed a similar breakdown of task types.

After comparing writing activities in level 1 and level 2 lesson plans, the teacher-researchers realised there were fewer writing tasks, and not as much variety in level 2. Some weeks had no writing at all. Many of the writing tasks that did exist only asked students to write words, or at most a sentence. Very few tasks asked students to write more extended texts (e.g. a paragraph). They also confirmed that very few writing activities were designed for lesson A and, when they were, they were limited to copying from a model text or note-taking. There were no free or creative writing activities (at any level) and no tasks were open-ended.

Classroom teacher survey

A survey was designed for CTs to find out what their opinions were, the experience they had teaching writing, how writing was being taught at school, and what they thought were the students' attitudes to writing.

CTs responded that writing was difficult for some students because they didn't always have the skills to transfer their thoughts to a text, or they tended "to write the same way they spoke". CTs also mentioned that writing "requires abstraction, putting ideas together, being coherent," and "not all the kids have developed these skills".

Mainly, it was reported that "children have difficulties when it comes to writing, mainly because they don't know how or where to start," "they don't have enough vocabulary," or "their ideas are disorganised". CTs also mentioned "lack of self-esteem" being a barrier and that many students felt that writing was something they could not do.

The results of the survey were not all negative, however. CTs mentioned "perseverance and creativity" as strengths, and that "children work better when the topic they have to write about is interesting, engaging and related to their personal experience". All CTs seemed to agree that when students are asked to write on their computers "they work better" and "with more enthusiasm".

Samples of students' writing

The teacher-researchers asked CTs to share samples of written texts in Spanish created by their students, including those that were well written and those that needed improvement. The following issues to work upon were noted:

- **Organisation.** Students found difficulty with layout of the text on the paper, often leaving blank space.
- **Punctuation.** Difficulties with when to use commas, full stops and capital letters were observed.
- **Paragraphs.** Many students didn't know how to divide their written discourse into paragraphs. Sentences were clustered together arbitrarily into paragraphs or there was simply one block of text.
- **Spelling.** There were many spelling mistakes in Spanish.
- **Lexis.** It was observed that a lack of lexis in Spanish made it difficult for students to express themselves in writing.

Action and intervention

Based on the opinions of CTs, the samples of writing in Spanish and taking their syllabi into account, the teacher-researchers planned a writing activity to try in class with 5th grade students. Unit 2 (level 2, week 51) has as its topic Environmentally aware super heroes. The unit begins with a lesson about *Eco boy* and *Eco girl*, who discover treasure that has magic power.

The teacher-researchers believed this topic (super heroes) would be engaging for the students. Linguistically, students had covered the simple present, free-time activities, professions and what they like doing, and in the previous year they had seen colours, actions and clothes. The aim was to integrate this knowledge into a writing activity that would form part of lesson A.

The first time the teacher-researchers tried the new writing activity for this lesson was not successful. They gave the writing task without a model to see how the students managed. It was observed that the children were able to express some of their ideas but they did not write complete sentences. In addition, not enough time was allocated to the activity.

Revising the writing activity

After the initial attempt, the teacher-researchers realised they needed to provide more support to help the students organise their ideas. In order to do this, the idea of creating a mind map was introduced,

as well as providing the students with a model to help them. After seeing the model, it was hoped that the students would then be engaged by creating their own ideal superheroes, personalising the experience. The teacher-researchers also saw this as a good opportunity for students to work collaboratively with others and to help each other.

The second time they tried the activity, students were given more support and more time. The teacher guided the students to write a description, using complete sentences, of the superhero they created together. Care was also taken to ensure the writing task built on the students' prior knowledge. By doing this, they hoped to encourage the students to make connections between language they had been exposed to previously, and to feel more confident when they wrote.

The teacher-researchers wanted to show students that writing is more than copying a text and following a rigid model. They felt that if students were given the freedom to express what they wanted to, they would better enjoy writing.

The second activity was more successful and all of the students were able to produce a paragraph about their superhero.

The activity was designed as follows:

Superhero writing activity (part 1)	
Lead-in	Pre-writing activity: RT shows students the picture of different superheroes and orally describes one of them. Students have to guess the superhero the RT is describing.
Development	<p>Creating the class superhero: RT tells students that they will create a new superhero together. RT goes to the following link and shows students different options (gender, physical description, clothes, superpower, etc.). http://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/en/games/style-hero?page=16</p> <p>Students and teachers choose features and powers and create their class superhero together.</p> <p>Describing the superhero (shared writing): Once they have created a superhero, RT describes him or her (orally) and elicits from students what they will need to include when describing the superhero in writing.</p> <p>RT writes on the whiteboard the description of this superhero. In order to do this, RT asks questions and, using answers from the students, starts writing the paragraph (e.g. What's his/her name? How old is he/she? What's his/her favourite free-time activity?). RT includes all these elements in the description: name, real name, age, physical appearance, favourite free-time activity, clothes, super power).</p> <p>RT asks students to copy the model text.</p>
Closure	For homework, students are asked to create their own superhero using the website.

Superhero writing activity (part 2)	
Lead-in	RT elicits previous class work, showing the superhero they created together and asking students to show each other the superhero they created for homework.
Development	<p>Pre-writing A: RT elicits from students the elements they need to include when describing their superhero and creates a mind map on the whiteboard. All the elements they will include are ones included in last week's description (name, real name, age, physical appearance, favourite free-time activity, clothes, super power).</p> <p>Mind map: In pairs/groups students work with the superhero they created (for homework) and create their own mind map with key information. RT uses class superhero as a model.</p> <p>Pre-writing B: RT tells students that they will now add more information about the new superhero. RT shares with students a list of new superpowers and invites them to choose one of them for their own superhero. After that RT shares different <i>headquarters</i> options as well as a choice of <i>sidekicks</i>. Students discuss and choose the ones they like. These are added to the mind map.</p> <p>Word bank: RT asks students if they need to know any vocabulary in order to write their descriptions and provides explanations as required.</p> <p>Writing: In pairs students write the descriptions of their own superheroes.</p> <p>Wrap-up: Ask one or two volunteers to share their description with the whole class.</p>
Closure	<p>For homework, ask the students to upload the picture of their superhero and its description to <i>Crea</i>.</p> <p>Play the song 'Superhero' by <i>Script</i>. Students listen, dance and say the name of the superheroes they see on the screen.</p>

Results

After the activities were used in class, CTs were asked about their effectiveness. One CT said that her students were *“more interested and willing to write”* after the first lesson. She said the students had difficulties with grammar and word order. She also mentioned the mind maps worked well to help the students organise their work.

Another CT mentioned that “learners were able to write a coherent paragraph with well-organised ideas” because of the writing activity. She said she thought the *“collaborative writing”* the students engaged in was particularly effective.

Reflections on this action research

The teacher-researchers reflected on their involvement in action research and believed it was *“a systematised way of reflecting, doing and changing”* their practice. They also found it *“empowering”* and found themselves spending time *“immersed in passionate discussions about their teaching context”*.

Through participation in the research, Estela and Irene *“realise that there is much more than designing an activity... to change, make a difference and succeed, it is necessary to analyse all sides of the problem. We learnt that when we establish the context of research, not only we have to consider the*

characteristics of the group itself and how they work but also to analyse the syllabus and overall learning objectives.” The teacher-researchers also mentioned the importance of having a clear objective before beginning action research: *“What I want learners to develop, what I want to improve with my intervention, what it is for,”* and a solid theoretical framework *“is essential to implement the change, so when the time to put it into practice arrives you know exactly why and how to do things.”* Finally, they stressed the need to be flexible: *“To adapt our plans when faced with the unexpected, to solve anything that may arise while implementing the agreed actions.”*

Case 2: Revising vocabulary in remote teaching

Eloisa Piñon, mentored by María José Galleno

As an RT, Eloisa realised that *“most students don't receive enough help at home with English.”* This teacher-researcher was also aware that external factors sometimes prevented the CT from following the plan for lessons B and C. These factors include times when there is poor Internet bandwidth at the school, or when the internet fails completely; children not bringing their computers to class; children not having access to computers because they are in need of repair or replacement; special events that mean lessons are not taught because of lack of time; children's absences because of weather alerts (due to flooding, heavy rain, or wind); and other reasons.

This means that an RT may find the children have not properly practised the learning objectives presented in lesson A, which can present a barrier to advancing with the syllabus. Eloisa believed this was problematic particularly with vocabulary.

With this in mind, Eloisa set out to examine the following through action research:

- What strategies used in face-to-face lessons for revising vocabulary can be adapted for a videoconferencing lesson?
- What is the effect on the lesson if these are implemented?
- How effective are these vocabulary revision activities on the children's progress?

Planning exploratory action research

Eloisa started by compiling a list of vocabulary revision strategies generally used in face-to-face teaching. After reflecting on these, she realised that most of these could be implemented as is or adapted to teaching via videoconferencing. Eloisa next decided which would work best for her teaching context.

The following were the strategies she chose to examine:

- Picture dictionary
- Memory games
- Discovery games
- Songs
- Information gap
- Matching pictures with words
- Dialogues

Data collection

Eloisa decided that while students were doing the tasks she designed, she would observe them and notice if they were engaged, paying attention and participating. She counted the students who were paying attention and those who were distracted. This way she would rank the strategies according to a student engagement score.

Because she knew it would be difficult to teach and keep an accurate record of engagement at the same time, she decided to film the lessons and analyse the impact of the vocabulary revision strategies later.

In addition to observing the students' body language, she also wanted to count each time a student raised their hand, as an indicator of a willingness to participate. Marking a student as *distracted* meant he or she was doing something completely different from what they should have been doing during an activity. Finally, Eloisa also conducted a survey, asking the

children "*which of the activities they liked a lot, which they didn't like and which liked up to a point.*"

Results

The piloting of activities in class and review of the recordings of the lessons showed that students participated most during *Songs* and the *Picture Dictionary* activities, and less during the *Information gap* and the *Discovery game*. Students were most distracted during the *Dialogues*. Results of the survey correlated with the data collection, with the students indicating that their favourite activities (100 per cent) were: *Memory game*, *Discovery game*, *Songs* and *Picture dictionary*. Ninety-two per cent of students said they liked *Matching pictures with words*. The least popular was *Dialogues*: only 38 per cent of students indicated they liked it, though Eloisa noted that, surprisingly, "*their participation when doing the activity was very high*".

Conclusions

The action research helped Eloisa feel more confident about implementing a number of strategies to help students with vocabulary revision during her remote lessons. She feels she learned that "*children need quick and simple instructions in order to keep their focus and the production required must be seen to be easy for them to perform*," and that using videoconferencing "*gives us the chance to show images and words easily in order to support an explanation*," and "*sometimes one image is all it takes to explain a word*."

When it came to students' attention, she saw that some of these activities result in "*students eager to participate*," and she is keen to continue with action research in her practice as a way to improve her own insights and the learning of her students.

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16

Inclusive practices in *Ceibal en Inglés*

Silvia Rovegno

- 72 per cent of primary school students in Uruguay learn English via videoconferencing, reaching schools in all departments of the country and all social quintiles
- 85 per cent of remote teachers (RTs) report having at least one child with special educational needs (SEN) in their lessons
- The most common difficulty reported is related to cognition and learning (49.6 per cent)
- The *Ceibal en Inglés* annual English test shows similar results across different socio-cultural groups

Introduction

As the UK's principal cultural relations organisation, the British Council's work is centered on building meaningful, enduring and respectful relationships across different cultures and, as such, the organisation is strongly committed to equality, diversity and inclusion. Plan Ceibal in Uruguay was set up in 2007 in order to achieve inclusion and equality of opportunity by providing access to technological devices for all children in primary state education and specialised training and materials for classroom teachers to use with these devices; thus, bridging the gap between the most privileged and the less privileged groups in society. Plan Ceibal's president, Miguel Brechner, has stated that: "We have built equity in access to devices and internet, as well as access to platforms that improve learning such as the digital library, the study of English, mathematics, robotics and programming" (Plan Ceibal, 2017:10). Both organisations have a strong commitment to removing barriers and promoting equality in the contexts in which they work.

Background

Two key terms lie at the centre of this chapter and act as foundations in the pursuit of equality in any educational programme: diversity and inclusion. According to UNESCO (2017:7) diversity refers to "people's differences which may relate to their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, language, culture, religion, mental and physical ability, class and immigration status." More specifically, in the context

of education, diversity is defined as: "The visible and invisible differences, accepting them, and harnessing and maximising the potential they bring. This means that as teachers we recognise that people are different in many visible and invisible ways, and by understanding, valuing and managing these differences effectively, our colleagues and learners will benefit" (British Council, 2009:9).

Inclusion, on the other hand, is defined as "a process that helps overcome barriers limiting the presence, participation and achievement of learners" (UNESCO, 2017:7). Historically, these barriers have been interpreted under different models of disability. Currently, a social model is used to understand disability as "socially-imposed barriers that prevent people with impairments from participating fully on an equal basis with others" (British Council, 2017:6). It is our understanding, following this conceptualisation, that the barriers learners might find in different educational contexts do not stem from a particular impairment or condition but rather are the result of the interaction with that environment and the attitudes people hold there. It is therefore our role as educators to identify those barriers and develop strategies to remove them to achieve quality in education for all students alike.

When talking about inclusive practices in any area, two key concepts come to mind: access and engagement.

Access via *Ceibal en Inglés*

UNESCO notes that "the principles of inclusion and equity are ... not only about ensuring access to education, but also about having quality learning spaces and pedagogies that enable students to thrive, to understand their realities, and to work for a more just society" (UNESCO, 2017:18). *Ceibal en Inglés* contributes to Uruguay achieving this by providing access to English language instruction to students in primary state schools, something that was restricted in the past to those students whose parents could afford to pay private language tuition. Face-to-face (f2f) language instruction is limited due to the lack of English language teachers in several parts of the country. The reach in state schools for f2f language instruction is 28 per cent, mainly in the nation's capital and urban areas, with remote language teaching (RLT) at 72 per cent, catering for over 80,000 school children (Plan Ceibal, 2017:60).

Ceibal en Inglés reaches schools in underprivileged areas across the country. These schools called *Aprender* (priority attention schools in areas of relative structural difficulties) represent 28.3 per cent of the schools taught English through *Ceibal en Inglés*. RTs, in agreement with classroom teachers (CTs) and Ceibal mentors, adjust the lesson plans and teaching to suit the particular needs of students in these contexts. The CTs report that the inclusion of

these schools in the programme also allows them, through the means of English, to reinforce the instruction of Spanish.

In 2016, a *rural schools* programme introducing a different technological solution was piloted in order to reach schools in non-urban, isolated areas. These schools do not have access to high-speed fibre-optic internet, which is necessary for videoconferencing (VC). The pilot introduced an alternative solution where the RT used the VC equipment to call the school and connect to special software on a personal computer using a standard internet connection. This made it possible for rural schools to have access to English classes. They represent 5.8 per cent of the total number of students in primary education in the Uruguay public state system (see the case study on

rural schools in this publication for further information).

Engagement and attention to special educational needs (SEN)

Uruguay is moving towards a fully inclusive education approach in compulsory primary and secondary education. This means that all children are “educated together in a unified educational system regardless of any differences” (Florian and Walton, 2017:1). Therefore, students with SEN in most cases take part in mainstream education and pedagogical practices are adjusted to provide access to cater for their particular needs. When talking about SEN profiles, four clear categories are identified by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice (2015:97–98):

Category	Description
Communication and interaction	Children and young people with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) have difficulty in communicating with others. This may be because they have difficulty saying what they want to, understanding what is being said to them or they do not understand or use social rules of communication.
Cognition and learning	When children and young people learn at a slower pace than their peers, even with appropriate differentiation. Learning difficulties cover a wide range of needs ... where children are likely to need support in all areas of the curriculum and associated difficulties with mobility and communication.
Social, emotional and mental health difficulties	Children and young people may experience a wide range of social and emotional difficulties which manifest themselves in many ways. These may include becoming withdrawn or isolated, as well as displaying challenging, disruptive or disturbing behaviour.
Sensory and/or physical needs	Children have a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of the educational facilities generally provided.

Generally speaking, we can say that students with SEN might find barriers (generic or specific) in the following areas:

Areas/profiles	Communication and interaction	Cognition and learning	Social, emotional and mental health difficulties	Sensory and/or physical needs
Access to input material	√	√		√
Processing input material	√	√		√
Linguistic processing of material		√		
Producing a certain task output	√	√	√	√
Handling transitions	√	√	√	√
Handling interaction with peers	√		√	
Following the development of lesson	√	√	√	√
Smaller span of working memory	√	√	√	
Problems with sustained attention	√		√	
Difficulties in time management and organising work	√	√	√	
Difficulties in automatising new skills	√	√		

Research strategy

In order to explore the nature of *Ceibal en Inglés* in terms of attention to diversity and the development of inclusive practices, the following research strategy was devised. First, general surveys were carried out with RTs to identify the conceptualisation of diversity and inclusion in the context of remote teaching, the difficulties they have faced and the strategies they have developed as a result. Secondly, when successful inclusive practices were identified, an in-depth interview with the RT was carried out. One of these served as the basis for the case study that follows this chapter. At the same time, interviews with CTs and academic managers were conducted to identify how they dealt with these aspects.

Results of *Ceibal en Inglés*

In the 2016 online English language test given to students annually to assess their overall learning progress, the results across socio-cultural levels indicated the students achieved similar results: “When analysing the results obtained based on the school’s socio-cultural level, we can see that students from all contexts reach levels A1 and A2. The percentage of students who fail to demonstrate knowledge of English (level A0) both in reading and listening comprehension is similar across all contexts” (Marconi and Luzardo, 2017:17). This result indicates that remote teaching is proving successful as a means of providing access to foreign language education across socio-cultural groups and contexts

Reactions to *Ceibal en Inglés*

This correlates with the experience of classroom teachers across contexts when reflecting upon remote teaching. One CT of a multi-grade group, where students from different ages come together, in an *Aprender* school in Colonia, describes her experience and the impact *Ceibal en Inglés* has had on her learners: “When the programme started, I was opposed to it because I was afraid, I was ashamed of my English, which was not very good. I felt I was not capable of doing what the programme asked of me. But then when I saw the children’s enthusiasm, how hooked they were with learning English this way, I changed my mind. My school is located in an underprivileged area and none of the kids have the chance to study English privately so they are very happy to have this chance. They look forward to lesson A. They demanded that I delivered lessons B and C. It was hard at first but our RT helped me, gave me guidance and little by little I have been improving. I have definitely changed my mind about remote teaching. It is a very positive experience.”

Another CT described the experience in her school in Montevideo: “When the programme came out, I

thought it was a very important opportunity. If you came into the neighbourhood where the school is, you would see that there is no running water, the streets are made of soil and have holes. Imagine in this context to be given the chance to learn a foreign language! My students even have trouble with their mother tongue. For me, this programme gives students not just the chance to learn but also the experience of a lifetime. Nowadays, we all learn via the screen, so having the chance to do so and develop those skills, I think it’s great.”

One RT from the British Council Remote teaching Centre in Montevideo described her experience teaching remotely to children in priority attention schools: “I think that teaching in general in these schools is different from teaching in other schools. When it comes to remote teaching, we need to be more aware of the context of the school and all the difficulties and problems the kids have. Encouraging children is always important, but in these schools it becomes even more important. Some kids are too shy or don’t want to participate, or feel they are not able to learn or do things right. Considering this, what we do to motivate them plays a key role here.”

A RT from the British Council Remote Teaching Centre in Buenos Aires reflected on the adaptations she needs to make when teaching to *Aprender* schools: “Teaching in *Aprender* schools differs in that content and activities require more personalisation and adaptation than in other schools. This often means delivering one lesson in two weeks. Students need more scaffolding and visual aids to understand instructions, concepts and meaning.”

CTs at rural school also reported on the positive effects remote teaching has had on their students. One CT from Artigas told us: “This programme is allowing students to develop a significant cultural background, with children being exposed to a different language and teachers from outside their local area. In particular, their vocabulary has been enriched greatly as well as their production. This programme provides a great democratising opportunity.”

Another CT teaching at a rural school from Salto acknowledges: “I believe that the objective of the programme is being fulfilled at a national level. At first, the videoconference seemed to be a barrier to learning, but now that barrier has been removed. We all recognise that this is a new and valid way of learning for all children. This is the world we are living in, it opens doors for our learners. We, classroom teachers, are now doing an online course and we are learning as well. We have also adapted to learn in this way in a technology-mediated context. Learning like this has its very positive points.”

Catering for SEN in remote language teaching

77 per cent of RTs interviewed reported the presence of students with SEN in their remote groups. A further eight per cent did not identify this presence but went on to describe in an open question the presence of students and the implementation of strategies that would constitute students with SEN. It is therefore clear that RTs need to be provided with strategies to deal with different SEN so that they can adapt materials, plans and lessons to cater for all students' needs.

The most commonly reported SEN relates to cognition and learning (49,6 per cent of reported cases), with 72 per cent of these cases being students with dyslexia. Social, emotional or mental difficulties were the second most reported, and behavioural difficulties were identified in all these cases. Communication and interaction difficulties make up 8.3 per cent of the cases reported by RTs. Finally, sensory or physical needs represent 6.6 per cent. Visual impairment was identified as the cause in all the cases reported in this category.

These findings relate to the strategies RTs report they implement when planning and delivering their remote lessons. As stated above, students with cognition and learning difficulties might experience problems when processing input material, so it is only logical that RTs feel that accounting for this in the teaching materials is paramount. Often, online presentations can be designed in such a way that the barriers for input processing are lifted.

It is important to remember that the online presentation is for the remote lesson what the whiteboard is for the face-to-face lesson. It is here where RTs present the language to be learned, provide practice and guidance as well as present classroom routines. Therefore, it is essential that accommodation for SEN is made in this area.

Firstly, RTs mentioned using a special font to cater for students with dyslexia. They make use of open source fonts such as *Dyslexie* or *OpenDyslexic*, which have been created to facilitate the processing of written text by students with dyslexia. At the same time, RTs reduce the amount of text that is present in their presentations. As one RT from Uruguay reported: "I try to avoid using too much text in my slides or use images instead of words when possible." This strategy of reducing the amount of text is also employed when dealing with a reading text. Here RTs use segmentation, breaking down the text into smaller, manageable units.: "When I'm working with a reading text I use two strategies; I use a dyslexia-friendly font in my PPTs and I divide the text into small pieces so we can focus one idea at a time."

As well as adjusting the font and the amount of text in slides, RTs reported used visual organisers or icons to represent classroom routines or activities that are commonly carried out in the remote lesson. These

visual cues act as an advance organiser for students to help them identify the activity or routine to come and adjust their behaviour and attention to suit the particular needs of the activity.

The existence of *Crea2*, the learning management system (LMS) provides RTs with a further tool to cater for students with SEN. Firstly, *Crea2* allows students to provide answers in a different way for the tasks in the remote lesson. One example is with students with speech disorders: "These students cannot communicate orally but they can on the platform by leaving their answers in a written form."

Secondly, the *badges* feature in the LMS is used as a tool to motivate students with behavioural problems to participate in their remote lesson: "I try to encourage participation through the use of Badges in *Crea2* whenever they say something in class that is relevant or when they behave appropriately in the class, and it has worked, they participate more."

The role of the CT is central in order to develop a suitable strategy to cater for all students' needs. Accordingly, a questionnaire is given to CTs at the beginning of the course, via which they inform RTs of the presence of students with SEN and the accommodations that are already in place to cater for their needs.

CTs and RTs also decide if any changes are needed in the weekly cycle to cater for students' needs. One RT, when talking about a student with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), stated: "The CT and I work on making adjustments to the plans and we design activities that he may find engaging. He seems to have improved his participation in class as a result of these changes." In the remote lesson, the CT also supports the RTs by sitting certain students with SEN close to her, to monitor their work more closely and provide assistance when needed.

Considering the four profiles described above, the strategies reported include (see table on next page):

Conclusion

Remote teaching can provide access to education in areas where students might not otherwise have an opportunity to learn. In the case of *Ceibal en Inglés*, remote teaching provides an effective solution to the lack of teachers across Uruguay and has reached 72 per cent of the students in primary state schools. The results obtained in the annual online English test and the testimonies of teachers and other stakeholders provide evidence to its effectiveness.

Remote language teaching in schools in different areas and contexts is not without challenges. RTs need to observe, analyse and try out different adaptations to suit not just different socioeconomic contexts and realities but also students with SEN. The development of these refined skills and adaptations is still a work in progress.

Communication and interaction	Cognition and learning	Social, emotional and mental health difficulties	Sensory and/or physical needs
Seating arrangement: close to the CT	Shorter activities that make use of different skills	Award badges/stars in <i>Crea2</i> when students have engaged in the remote lesson	Seating arrangement: close to the screen and/or the CT
Short instructions	TPR activities: e.g. action songs	Use TPR activities to provide a break in the routine and a kind of 'break' in the lesson	Use zoom in/out to draw attention to specific parts of the flipchart/presentation
Tone of voice: firm but calm	Reduce copying tasks Provide written summary for CT to photocopy and paste in English copybooks	Seating arrangement: close to the CT for easy monitoring	Describe pictures and images for students with visual impairment
Provide more visual cues or icons for activities	Varying interaction patterns		Larger fonts with dark colours and lighter background
Use <i>Crea2</i> to provide answers to tasks during and after the remote lesson	Adapted flipcharts/presentations		Upload presentations on <i>Crea2</i> so students can access them during and after the remote lesson
	Use text and audio at the same time so students can read and listen		
	Segment reading texts		

In the case of SEN, areas in which RTs are making accommodations resemble those that are made in face-to-face instruction when it comes to material design and certain aspects of classroom management. Remote teaching also requires specific accommodation due to its unique nature. RTs rely on the CT and work closely as a team to introduce effective measures to cater for students with SEN, particularly in lesson A, where the CT's active monitoring and intervention as well as constant communication with the RT is necessary to identify what aspects are being effectively delivered or those which need adaptation.

Use of an LMS (such as *Crea*, a version of *Schoology*) that complements the course provides a valuable back channel (i.e. using computers to maintain real-time online conversation alongside the primary activity) for RTs and students. For some SEN students, it gives them the chance to provide answers to tasks in the remote lesson in a safer environment where they are not put on the spot and have more time to think.

The strategies reported here are the first ones to be identified as effective in remote teaching to students with SEN. As stated above, this work is ongoing and as such can be considered the first steps by project stakeholders to cater for those students with SEN.

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16.1

Catering for visually impaired students in remote lessons

Silvia Rovegno

Adriana Bermudez Remote teacher	Grade: 4 and 5
British Council Uruguay	Location: Montevideo
School type: Urban Levels: 1 and 2	

Adriana Bermudez has been an English teacher since 1989 and has worked with students of all ages in different educational contexts, ranging from language schools to one-to-one in-company lessons. In 2014, she became particularly interested in a new programme where English was taught remotely. She thought of it as a challenge, even for an experienced teacher, so she joined as a remote teacher. In 2016, Adriana had a rewarding experience when teaching a remote class containing two visually-impaired students. Not only was she able to adopt an approach to teaching based on inclusive practices, but she also developed an interest in special educational needs. Since then she has focused on this aspect of professional development, both in her practice as a remote teacher and when supporting other teachers in her role as Senior Teacher Coordinator at the British Council's Remote Teaching Centre in Montevideo.

Introduction

The primary school featured in this case study is located in Durazno, a city in the centre of Uruguay. The school is open in the mornings and afternoons, each shift catering to a different population of students. Classes usually have about 25 students. The school has an open-door policy, which means all students who want to attend the school are able to do so; there are no barriers or prerequisites to comply with. To cater for a heterogeneous population, the school has a special education department to assist teachers and students.

Two new students

Adriana was in charge of teaching all of the *Ceibal en Inglés (CeI)* groups in this school, both in the morning and in the afternoon shifts, so she developed very close bonds with the classroom teachers (CTs) and the school community at large. In 2016, two new students with acute visual impairment joined the

school. Adriana recalled her first weeks of work with those groups: *“At the beginning it was very difficult for me. It was so challenging because it was the first time I had taught students with this condition. In general, we (remote teachers) tend to use a lot of visuals. And in lesson A, the visual input happens most of the time, so, at the beginning for me it was difficult, and I must say that I was a little frustrated. I believed I couldn't cope with this. Then I began to change things, little by little.”*

The two students had different profiles. The nine-year-old student was studying English for the first time and presented some mobility issues due to spina bifida. According to Adriana, *“the student needed help moving around, getting from the classroom to the room where the videoconferencing equipment required time and help.”* However, the student demonstrated independence and had a lot of support from the family. The ten-year-old joining level 2 developed acute visual impairment at a later age and did not have the support of the family to help develop more independence and coping strategies.

The role of the CT

As with every *CeI* class, teamwork between the remote teacher (RT) and CT is central to the success of the programme. In challenging cases such as this one, the CT's role in the lesson and attitude to collaboration are paramount. Adriana reflected on this: *“Both classes and CTs had a very positive attitude and they welcomed those kids very warmly. It was very nice. It was indeed a very good experience for the other children, as well. The CTs helped them develop behaviours and attitudes for the rest of their lives, not only how to behave in a classroom, but attitudes and behaviours so they help each other to develop empathy, to be patient, to be kind with each other no matter our abilities.”*

Co-ordination between Adriana and the CTs was central for this work to be carried out. In this case, co-ordination meetings also included a special education teacher that helped the children at school. Adriana explained why this was important: *“We developed a very close relationship through co-ordination. We had three teachers co-ordinating. They were very open-minded, they always suggested things, telling me what the children liked or found useful in their lessons, so I could make adjustments to the work I was doing.”*

Adapting lessons for the visually impaired

As mentioned previously, CeI remote lessons often rely heavily on visual input, as RTs use videos, flashcards, posters and games to present and practise the new language. Adriana quickly realised that the way she presented these materials had to change. At first she made small changes to her instructions. For example, when presenting a video instead of saying “let’s watch a video,” she said “let’s listen to a conversation”.

There were also other adaptations that needed to be made to tasks used in the lessons, particularly with those with a lot of visuals. The aims and objectives of the lesson, and the materials generally remained the same, but the way the material was accessed and how understanding was assessed were the two areas where accommodations needed to be made to suit the needs of these students. By not altering the aims, objectives or materials, all students were able to follow and participate in each remote lesson.

“I stopped using exercises like ‘spot the difference’ or ‘let’s describe a picture’. Instead I incorporated interactive exercises, in which they had to think, evaluate, to use higher skills. They discussed, they gave opinions, heard dialogues. Both students were very quick at listening, and they had very good pronunciation. They paid much more attention to detail when they were listening and they understood more than the others.” Adriana said this helped the other students learn to pick up on details, “so, it was very, very beneficial for the rest as well.”

Students benefitted in other ways

Using a buddy system also seemed to be a successful strategy for both groups. One of the students was experiencing difficulties relating to his peers, and so working with a buddy and in groups in the remote lessons helped the child develop social skills. *“This child had difficulties dealing with people, and socialising with partners. When we did pair or group work, he started to develop social skills. The student was not only learning English, but also learning how to be with other kids. The CT could see how this improved his performance and integration in other areas,”* Adriana said.

All students with visual impairment are given a specially adapted laptop by Plan Ceibal to help them with their studies. Both of these students had one of these. One of the students in particular enjoyed working with it and was very good at using it. This made it possible to access materials on the Learning Management System (Crea2) during the remote lesson and for him to do his homework afterwards. However, the other student preferred not to use the adapted computer in the remote lesson. Adriana recalled: *“This student was reluctant to use the computer and preferred interaction with me and his*

peers in the remote lesson. This interaction was very important for this student; talking, working on pronunciation, even repeating words.”

Learning at the same pace

One of the myths around special educational needs (SEN) students is that they learn at a different pace. However, Adriana’s experience tells a different story. Given that she was teaching other groups in the same school, she was able to draw conclusions about these students’ learning compared to that of the others. Her conclusions are clear about the progress these two students made in English: *“I believe that the way they developed during the course was quite similar to the rest. One of them was really spontaneous and was eager to participate and interact. The other participated upon my request but was able to do so appropriately.”*

Remote teachers and SEN

Adriana felt that facing this situation put all her skill as a remote teacher to the test. She asked for help and worked closely with CTs and the school to adapt her lessons. This is the situation in which many other teachers find themselves in. SEN training is not generally part of most teacher training courses in Uruguay. Little by little it is becoming part of some initial training courses and is being introduced into in-service training. Teachers are gradually raising their awareness and developing new skills and strategies to help teach SEN students. This is also the case in CeI, through the work of quality managers and the project team at large.

However, Adriana acknowledged that the first step needs to be taken by the remote teachers themselves: *“We need to put ourselves in the children’s shoes. At least for just a moment, to ask ourselves, ‘well, how can we make these students learn what I want to teach them?’ And there are ways; of course, I have proof there are ways to reach these students. We need to reach the point in which we feel that they are not different. When you reach that point, I believe that you understand how this works.”*

Support and mentoring

Because of her experience, Adriana agreed that RTs need support in the form of mentoring in order to be able to develop the strategies and understanding she was able to develop in this experience: *“I believe we need support. Because it’s not easy. But it was a very nice experience, indeed, a great experience. I learned a lot, from them.”*

The areas that RTs need more support with are, in her opinion, lesson planning and material adaptation, in particular, with the strategies that RTs use to develop their remote lessons: *“I believe that when you are teaching remotely, SEN learning needs much more*

attention in the strategies we use and the techniques we are going to use, and not all RTs are aware of this.”

What’s next?

Adriana’s experience with two visually impaired students changed her approach to teaching and became a turning point in her career: *“It made me grow as a teacher because I had never explored, I never had this kind of student. Of course, I had students with other kinds of SEN but not like this. Especially, because when you are teaching face to face you can sort it out in a different way, but when you are remotely delivering classes, especially when they rely on visual aids, this is a challenge, and it changes your point of view. So, for me it was very, very good experience.”*

16.2

Keeping primary students safe when using LMS

Verónica Pintos

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the protection of primary school children participating in the *Ceibal en Inglés* remote teaching programme. It specifically looks at the use of the learning management system (LMS) and how risks are managed at the Remote Teaching Centre (RTC) in Buenos Aires. The main objective of the chapter is to raise awareness and show how risks can be mitigated and/or dealt with.

An LMS (also called a virtual learning environment, or VLE) is a web-based system used in education to administer or supplement courses for learners and help teachers meet pedagogical goals when delivering content to students (Machado and Tao, 2007). There are many different types of LMS, but they offer broadly similar features. This case study will focus on the LMS utilised in *Ceibal en Inglés*, which is called *Crea*.

The use of LMS in primary education

The use of an LMS offers many possibilities for children learning a language (Greenwood, Arreaga-Mayer, Utley, Gavin and Terry, 2001). However, an LMS also poses numerous challenges for child protection, not only for teachers but also for academic managers in charge of leading blended learning projects (i.e. projects that combine online and face-to-face instruction) projects with children. These challenges must be clearly understood in order to protect children's safety online.

An LMS is now more commonly used with learners who meet in face-to-face classrooms, and the resources for learning offered “overlap with physical environments” (Dillenbourg, Schneider and Synteta, 2002:2–3) and extend the classroom teaching experience. This is the case of *Ceibal en Inglés*, with its weekly cycle of three 45-minute English language lessons (a remotely taught lesson via videoconferencing followed by two face-to-face practice lessons) being supplemented by exercises and activities offered in *Crea*.

Safety online

At first glance an LMS may seem to be a safe place for children, but there are risks. Online predators may gain access to children's accounts, for example. This may happen if the children's usernames and passwords are stolen, for instance, or if children

leave their laptops unlocked, allowing others the opportunity to access using the system using the children's profile. Either case potentially risks the children being unwittingly exposed to predators.

When children interact online there are other risks, which include “exposure to online bullying, inappropriate material, possibility of contact with harmful strangers and opportunities to cause harm to others” (Sharples, Grabe, Harrison and Logan, 2009:70). To help teachers, British Council Child Protection policy has established guidelines for the use of technology, including an LMS: “The e-safety procedures ... emphasise the need to educate children and staff and provide assistance for parents where necessary about the benefits, risks and responsibilities of using information technology” (British Council, 2017).

Educating children participating in *Ceibal en Inglés* on the responsible use of the LMS is of utmost importance for educators involved in the programme. Encouraging appropriate online behaviour and raising awareness of cyberbullying are two areas that remote teachers and classroom teachers typically deal with.

Use of *Crea* in *Ceibal en Inglés*

As mentioned, the LMS used in primary education in Uruguay is called *Crea*. It is a branded version of the commercially available LMS called Schoology (www.schoology.com) and provides teachers and students with an online asynchronous learning environment to access homework and other educational resources. *Crea* resembles an educational social network that stimulates learning through collaboration and communication between teachers and students (Plataformas, Centro Ceibal, n.d. [blog]). In *Ceibal en Inglés*, the use of *Crea* is particularly encouraged for writing activities, which the remote teacher (RT) can mark before the synchronous videoconferencing lesson.

In *Crea*, students are placed along with their classroom teacher (CT) in virtual classrooms (called *courses*) according to their school, grade and class. The students, for example, enrolled in the *Crea* course *4A-Inglés Escuela 32 Montevideo* attend the first class (A) of the 4th grade in Montevideo School number 32. When RTs are assigned classes, they are

also enrolled in the corresponding courses on the LMS, which is closed to the general public. All participants are given access via a username and password.

Upon accessing the platform, the user is presented with a *Recent Activity* dashboard. There are drop-down menus so that RTs can choose between courses (i.e. different classes). Each course dashboard presents material organised in weekly folders. Teachers have access to student marks and attendance records for each of the classes they teach, and students have access to a *gradebook* that displays their progress. Teachers and students can open blogs; record progress in electronic portfolios; post messages everyone can read, or others specific to courses; and interact in online forums. *Crea*, therefore, is used not only to store materials but also as an interactive and social online environment, which facilitates a learning community.

The LMS has a private messaging system, which the children have access to. Messages can be sent from children to children, children to teachers, and vice versa. There are no restrictions placed on this, and the children are used to contacting their RTs in this way.

Child protection at the RTC Buenos Aires

What follows is an examination of the potential risks and the procedures in place to deal with child protection issues at the British Council's Remote Teaching Centre (RTC) located in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The case study also outlines actual incidents and indicate how they were dealt with at the RTC.

Child protection focal point

The term *Child Protection Focal Point* (CPFP) is used by the British Council to refer to the person with local responsibility for all matters relating to child protection. CPFPs are supported by regional and global child protection teams, responsible for implementing an organisation-wide child protection policy and child safe strategy. The staff member appointed as CPFP is "the first point of contact for issues of child protection". CPFPs are in charge of co-ordinating and ensuring the effective implementation of the child protection policy. Their main responsibility is to "receive and act upon any reported concerns, as well as ensuring all staff are familiar with, and adhering, to the Child Protection Policy" (British Council, 2017). When remote teachers at the RTC in Argentina present a concern about a child, they are asked to contact the CPFP based in the premises.

Child protection risks

The main child protection risks identified in *Ceibal en Inglés* to be taken into account by both RT and CT are:

- a. *Access to inappropriate content*: teachers need to be aware that no online content can be shared without previously checking its appropriateness.
- b. *Cyberbullying*. Cyberbullying takes place when children and/or teenagers are "tormented, threatened, harassed, humiliated, embarrassed or otherwise targeted" by other children/teenagers using the Internet (see www.stopcyberbullying.org).

Mitigating risks

The first step a remote teacher should take to prevent children accessing inappropriate content is to check the materials they plan to share, especially videos or other resources outside of *Crea*. Online tools such as *SafeShare.TV*, allow the removal of unwanted content so that videos, for example, can be viewed safely.

Raising awareness of cyberbullying

There have been a number of competitions throughout the project to raise children's awareness. The *Internet Safety with Ceibal en Inglés* Contest (2015), *Cyberbullying Contest* (2016) and the British Council *E-Safety* posters (2017) have been used for these purposes. The competitions seem to have had an effect, as no cases of cyberbullying have been reported so far.

The first of these campaigns was *The Internet Safety with Ceibal en Inglés* Contest. Held in 2015 this gave children the opportunity to reflect by creating posters. Children were invited to design posters in groups and write five sentences in English about basic rules for children of their age to follow by children their age about using the Internet safely.

The competition was project-wide and designed by the Child Protection Focal Point in Uruguay, to raise awareness of risks among Uruguayan primary school children. The success of this competition led to it being repeated in 2016, with the winning entries printed on posters that were delivered to schools across the country, and on gift bags (see figure ii).



Figure i. Example Internet Safety poster
(Reproduced with permission)

BRITISH COUNCIL

STOP Cyberbullying competition

Plan Ceibal

2016 WINNING ENTRY

FOR BRITISH COUNCIL URUGUAY
PLAN CEIBAL EN INGLÉS

ALUMNOS:
SHAYA ARAUJO
MIRTA BORDENAVE
GEMA MADRUGA
PILAR CONTI
LAUTARO GIMENEZ
VIRGINIA GONZALEZ
FERNANDA OLIVERA
JULIA SERPA
WANDA NUÑEZ
NAHUEL CARBAJAL
MARIANO SEQUEIRA
ANGEL CURBELO
HURIEL LEGNAZZI
ELIAS MEDINA
MILENA SANCHEZ
PRISCILA EGUILIOR
WALTER DAHER
KEVIN DE LOS SANTOS
DIEGO SARAVIA

ALUMNOS DE 6to. B
ESCUELA N° 119 - SALTO
Maestra: Etelvina Rosconi

www.britishcouncil.uy

uruguay@britishcouncil.org

Figure ii. 2016 Winning competition entry from
School 119 in Salto.



Figure iii 2016 competition entry from School 17 Treinta y Tres

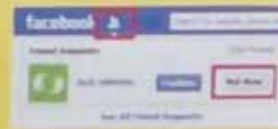
STOP CYBERBULLYING

1) - Do not use social networks without your teacher or parents' help.



2) - Use appropriate vocabulary and have a respectful attitude when debating.

3) - Don't chat with people you don't know.



4) - Keep a record or evidence of any aggression or offence in the social networks.



5) - Create different projects together with the government, in order to prevent cyberbullying, involving teachers principals students and families.



Figure iv 2016 competition entry from School 89, Paysandu

Actual child protection incidents

Incidents which the CFPF at the RTC in Buenos Aires, Argentina was contacted to provide guidance on include the following:

- Inappropriate video content. A case was reported of an RT sharing a popular song on video directly from YouTube, without previously checking it. The video contained inappropriate images for children.
- Inappropriate language. This has appeared in private messages and posts on course dashboards. The messages containing offensive remarks were reported directly by RTs and have included both private messages from students to RTs and forum posts with offensive language. In the case of the forum posts, a review with CTs led to the conclusion that the language used in those posts was not language the child would use and they believed the child's account had been accessed by an adult. This was of significant concern and it led to a campaign to educate the children about not leaving their computers unlocked and training on good practice for password management.

Procedures for dealing with issues at the RTC

Whenever *Ceibal en Inglés* RTs are faced with something of concern, they know to immediately contact the CFPF. An action plan is then put in place. Co-ordinators track the cases in confidential documents to which only the management team has access, to protect the children's identity. They also write reports on the cases, which are then shared with the CFPFs in Argentina and Uruguay to ensure that any learning is swiftly disseminated.

The CP action plans include sharing cases with the classroom teacher in charge of the group in which the RT detected the issue, immediately deleting posts containing offensive language so as not to expose other children to those messages and raising children's awareness of cyberbullying (and how to respond to it).

Conclusion

As the use of the LMS grows more popular, teachers need to be prepared to handle cyberbullying incidents, by, for example, raising children's awareness of the possible risks that interacting in online environments might bring.

All projects with an online component designed for children should ideally include e-safety guidelines for those participating, to learn how to interact in the LMS. Children should be given advice on how to report inappropriate behaviour and how best to secure their privacy, personal data and devices.

Parents and guardians should also have access to e-safety guidelines and academic managers should "encourage parental involvement, as this often leads to safer online experiences for children" (CIPA report, 2003:32).

The greatest challenge lies in cultivating a responsible, age-appropriate, digital citizenship in the LMS. This should be part of the teaching agenda in any remote language teaching project that involves children interacting with adults, and children interacting with children. If we consider the incorporation of digital citizenship contents into the curriculum, we will be working towards minimising risks for children, and we will help to develop a more child-safe blended learning environment.

Remote
language teaching:
Other projet

17

Teaching Spanish remotely into the UK

Pablo Toledo

This case study examines a pilot project to teach Spanish into UK schools via videoconferencing from the British Council Remote Teaching Centre (RTC) in Buenos Aires. The Spanish classes were taught once a week in two primary schools in London in 2016, and the teachers and students were later surveyed to find out their opinion on learning languages this way.

Background

Since the announcement in September 2012 that learning a language would be a statutory part of the Key Stage 2 curriculum in England, almost all primary schools in England now provide some teaching of languages to pupils throughout this stage. However, up to a quarter of teachers have a limited knowledge of the language they are expected to teach and 30 per cent of schools report having no access to specialist expertise (Tinsley and Board, 2017:3-5). The impact of this is studied in detail in the *Language Trends* reports (Tinsley and Board, 2017) that the British Council has published annually since 2013.

In order to test the feasibility of remote teaching as a potential solution to the above, the British Council Schools team in the UK and British Council Argentina jointly designed and implemented a pilot between January and May 2016 involving two Year 5 classes in William Patten School, Hackney, London, and three Year 4 classes in Bessemer Grange school, Southwark, London. The main objective was to support the teaching of Spanish in these primary schools and to test whether remote teaching with a native-speaking teacher raised intercultural awareness.

Course design

The materials were prepared especially for the lessons by the remote teachers, following the Hackney Scheme of Work for Spanish teaching (Clinton, 2013) and feedback from a needs analysis of classroom teachers on topics being covered in their classes. The subsequent materials included presentations, maps, photographs, realia, and videos prepared for the lessons featuring different Spanish speakers in real contexts shot in Argentina and Colombia. Given the age of the learners (7–11 years old), there was a strong visual focus and intensive use of drawings and photographs to present language and reinforce learning points.

Technology

The British Council worked in partnership with the London Grid for Learning Trust (LGf) for connectivity and technical support. The LGfL is “a community of schools and local authorities committed to using technology to enhance teaching and learning” (LGfL, 2016). During the pilot, a consultant from LGfL ran technical and feasibility tests, helped the schools set up the systems, guided the teachers in their use, carried out on-site visits, and provided ongoing support by scheduling the lessons and troubleshooting technical issues.

LGfL used Vscene (vscene.jisc.ac.uk) to manage and schedule the videoconferencing, and the schools used notebooks with special software (www.cisco.com/c/en/us/products/unified-communications/jabber) to connect to the videoconferencing hardware at the RTC in Argentina. The image from the notebooks was displayed on the interactive whiteboards in the classrooms.

Student survey

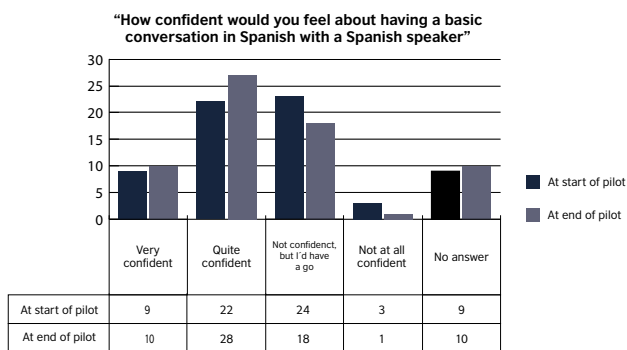
The 67 students in the two classes at William Patten School were given a questionnaire at the start of the pilot (February 2016) and the same questionnaire was given to them at the end of the period (May 2016) to compare the impact of the following aspects of the classes.

Confidence speaking in Spanish

When asked about their confidence when speaking Spanish at the start and end of the pilot, a positive impact on overall confidence levels was noted:

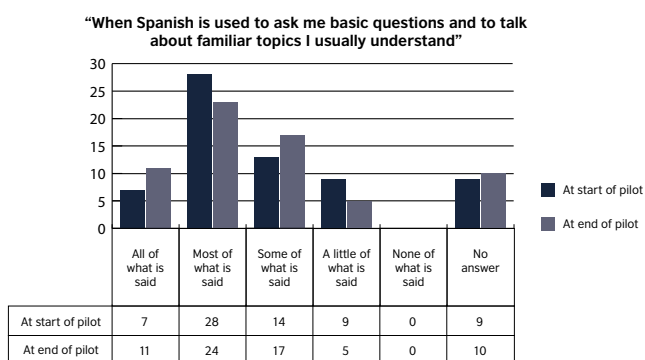
Examining individuals' data showed that a significant majority of respondents in the top three confidence levels maintained their answers (68 per cent of respondents in the “quite confident” category, 55 per cent of respondents in “Not confident but I'd have a go”, 67 per cent of respondents in “very confident”), and the majority of shifts were to higher levels of confidence (two respondents from “quite confident” to “not confident but I'd have a go”, one from “Not confident but I'd have a go” to “not at all confident”). This indicates that the sessions had a

positive impact on the students' confidence in their communicative competence in the language.



Language awareness

To assess the participants' self-perception of their understanding of Spanish at the essential levels of communication, which is an indirect measure of their language awareness and confidence in communicative competence, we asked the item: "When Spanish is used to ask me basic questions and



to talk about familiar topics, I usually understand..."

Six out of 28 initial respondents in the "Most of what is said" category were not present at school on the day the second questionnaire was handed out, which explains the drop of respondents in that category. After taking this into account, the responses in the "All of what is said" and "Some of what is said" are consistent with the previous chart and suggest a positive impact of the pilot.

Intercultural awareness

Another area of relevance was cultural understanding and awareness. At the start and end of the pilot, students were asked to list countries where Spanish is spoken. At William Patten, at the start of the pilot students listed 237 responses, 217 of which were correct (91 per cent). Incorrect answers were either not countries (Madrid, Barcelona) or not countries where Spanish was spoken (Brazil, Portugal, Italy). At the end of the pilot, students listed a total of 265 responses, 260 of which were correct (98 per cent). This suggests higher awareness and accuracy of places where Spanish is spoken.

Among the incorrect answers, Brazil and Italy were no longer mentioned at the end of the pilot and the incidence of Portugal dropped: this indicates awareness of the difference between Spanish and other Romance languages (Portuguese, French).

An interesting aspect of the students was also that several of them were to some degree bilingual already, as there were languages other than English spoken in their homes. Their degree of competence in the languages was not tested, but a list supplied by the principal of William Patten School included Bengali, Chinese, Czech, German, Gujarati, Italian, Punjabi, Polish, Somali, Spanish, Turkish, Urdu and Yoruba.

Teacher survey

At the end of the pilot, the classroom teachers involved were asked to respond to a questionnaire covering aspects related to the technology and platform, the resources used during the lesson, the impact on learning, the collaboration with the remote teacher and the cultural element embedded in classwork.

Technology

Teachers in both schools agreed that the lessons via videoconferencing worked. There was also agreement that the technology had been an aid to the lessons, that rapport was established, and that communication was easy for the pupils. The "warmth and enthusiasm" of the remote teachers was mentioned as a contributing factor.

Both schools reported some technical difficulties, but did not identify them as major issues. The quality of the interactive whiteboard used as a projector was mentioned as an important factor in the success of the lessons.

When asked about how learning through videoconferencing differed from face-to-face lessons, teachers highlighted the following areas:

- **Relevance of the medium:** "It offers a different experience to children and gives them access to new communication technologies that they might experience later in life; in the workplace, for example."
- **Key role of collaboration between teachers:** "Collaboration between the remote teacher and class teacher ensures that the lesson can progress in a purposeful way, informed by how the children are responding as a group, which might be difficult for the remote teacher to gauge alone."
- **Engagement:** "Collaboration also ensures that children are not passive learners, as [despite interactive methods being deployed by the remote teacher] it is potentially difficult to ensure that all

individuals are actively involved without the support of the classroom teacher.”

- **Classroom management:** “The teacher who is video-conferencing cannot manage behaviour or focus, which could lead to a lack of engagement if the teacher present in the classroom cannot reinforce the learning.”

Resources and materials

The resources and materials received positive feedback from the classroom teachers:

- “Presentations and videos were prepared well and adapted in lessons if the learning called for it.”
- “These were well chosen and purposeful and provided children with visual cues and models of the new vocabulary.” One teacher wrote that “videos were sometimes a little too fast-paced and lively for the children to access fully,” which is to be expected of authentic language used with beginner learners.

The visual elements of the presentations received positive feedback from both schools:

- “They ensured that children could make the link between the visual language and the auditory, making it easier for them to copy. Picture clues also helped their understanding.”
- “They also supported explanations effectively and when children were asking, for example, about a location, this could be shown on a map, which supported the verbal answer.”

Impact on language learning

The limited number of hours for this pilot meant that there was no measurable impact on overall language levels.

However, the classroom teachers in both schools highlighted the following:

- **Confidence:** “Pupils gained confidence in and familiarity with the patterns and key sounds of the Spanish language.” “The confidence did grow, especially from children who were hesitant to speak initially in front of the class.”
- **Vocabulary:** “Learners developed their vocabulary significantly as the process continued.”

Both schools mentioned noticing that the experience had a positive impact on the students’ attitude to Spanish and language learning. Asked about the overall impact of the pilot, this was the most salient aspect of the experience:

- “The children have had fun and gotten to know a teacher from a completely different country, who teaches them from the other side of the world, which they duly find amazing.”
- “It has allowed children to be fully immersed in Spanish as a language, by doing something ‘different’ and allowing them to engage in lessons in a different way!”

Collaboration with the remote teacher

Co-ordination was the regular process of communication between classroom and remote teachers to plan sessions, review content and approaches, and the work done so far. This process has been identified as a key component for the success of the remote teaching of children, and ongoing research in the context of the *Plan Ceibal en Inglés* programme is looking into the aspects that contribute to its importance and determine its success.

In the case of Bessemer Grange, coordination between remote teacher and classroom teacher was conducted via a set weekly videoconference meeting. For William Patten, as there were different classroom teachers involved, there was an initial videoconference and weekly contact via email.

The classroom teachers described the role of the co-ordination sessions in slightly different ways. This reflected their own training and experience.

William Patten classroom teachers, on account of their background in the teaching of Spanish, approached the lessons differently:

- “I met the teacher before the lesson to discuss their plan, made suggestions if I had any (I am Spanish trained) ... I then managed the classroom during the lessons for the three classes across the afternoon.”

The same teacher also reported impact on classroom routines outside the Spanish lessons:

- “As a Spanish speaker I could reinforce the learning from the remote lessons during our daily registration, but other teachers were not able to do this.”

Bessemer Grange classroom teachers generally did their co-ordination work via email exchange after an initial videoconference meeting. The teachers in that school reported that this was more time efficient, and perceived the arrangement as a more organic, less structured interaction:

- “Initial conference ‘introduction’ worked very well and subsequent email exchanges meant that this was more manageable than continuing pre and post evaluations

After the programme started, the school decided that the remote classes met all their Spanish language teaching needs:

- “As this was such an effective Spanish lesson, it became the weekly lesson rather than consolidating/extending it.”

This led to the following role being adopted by the classroom teacher when it came to co-ordination:

- “Our intended content and planning was shared with suggestions as to what was required from the remote session and then the remote teacher’s plan was forwarded beforehand. Where further developments were possible, subsequent dialogue ensured that the session was finely tuned by both teachers.”

Cultural elements

Remote teachers focused on basic areas of culture: countries where Spanish is spoken, traditional Latin American foods, places and traditions. They used pictures (including personal travel photographs featuring themselves), maps, flags, documentary videos and realia (different hats, traditional Argentine foods) to illustrate the points.

One of the schools noted that:

- “This gave the sessions contextual relevance and ensured that children were more aware of the advantages of learning another language and gained awareness possibilities for future worldwide travel. Learning about, for example, customs for food also made the topic more dimensional.”

Another aspect of cultural and linguistic relevance was the enhanced awareness of regional varieties of Spanish. The scheme of work used in the district of Hackney favoured the vocabulary and pronunciation of Castilian Spanish.

This was mentioned as a motivating factor in the feedback: “The children were interested in learning about the different pronunciations of the same language which they could link with their existing knowledge of English.”

Conclusions

While the pilot was small-scale, the feedback and data suggest that the teaching of foreign languages into UK primary schools via videoconference had a positive impact on language learning and motivation to learn the language. It can be said that this is a model worth exploring, either as a sole method of instruction or as a complement to existing lessons. This value is reinforced by the following quotes from learners:

- “You get to talk to someone who is all the way in Argentina, so it’s really exciting to know that.” Petra, year 5 pupil, William Patten Primary School
- “It helps me learn a new language and meet someone I don’t know, and he lives in Argentina which is amazing!” Oyreaice, year 5 pupil, William Patten Primary School

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18

Language for resilience: remote teaching of Spanish for refugees in Argentina

Leonor Corradi

Introduction

2017 saw the British Council pilot a remote teaching project for refugees dispersed across Argentina: the teaching of Spanish via videoconferencing. Language for resilience has been described as “giving vulnerable people the language tools they need to help withstand and recover from the effects of conflict and displacement” (Capstick and Delaney, 2016). Remote teaching (i.e. teaching synchronously via videoconferencing) was an efficient, flexible and easy way to reach refugees dispersed across geographically distant locations and allowed for mothers with children to join lessons they might not otherwise have been able to participate in.

Language for resilience in Argentina

In this section, reference will be made to the different groups in the project (including their language needs), the materials used, the lessons and the teachers responsible for delivering the lessons.

Course participants

Two different arrangements were made to cater for the needs of the course participants. Group A saw dispersed individuals and families located in different parts of Argentina join regular classes using their own devices. Group B, in the province of San Luis where the *Universidad de la Punta* houses Syrian refugees, saw the participants attend Spanish classes in a classroom at the university. In both cases, there were a wide variety of interests and age groups, with one factor in common: the need to integrate into society, for which language is essential.

Technology

The online connection to teachers was made using the *Zoom* web-based videoconferencing software (<https://zoom.us>), chosen because it is easy to use, robust and reliable. Participants generally either connected from home (Group A) or from a classroom at the university (Group B).

Knowledge of Spanish

The level of Spanish was varied. There were those who had some knowledge of Spanish, the third language for most of the participants. The Latin alphabet posed no problem to them. In the majority of cases, the other language spoken by participants was English. These participants understood the teachers when instructions were given in Spanish; moreover, they could already interact in Spanish quite fluently. They were, in the majority of cases, those in Group A. On the other hand, the participants in San Luis (Group B) had a very low level or no knowledge of Spanish at all. They needed a facilitator who spoke Arabic and worked as an interpreter during the lessons. In the case of Group A, no facilitator was required, and those with a low level of Spanish could resort to English or rely on other participants to be able to follow the lessons. This marked difference between the participants had a significant impact on class dynamics and learning outcomes.

Materials

The materials chosen were tailor made rather than commercially available published materials, for several reasons. Firstly, the preference of the Ministry of Education was for bespoke materials. Secondly, adapting published materials for use online would have led to questions relating to copyright permission. Finally, the Spanish used in most commercially available published materials (i.e. Castilian Spanish) is different from the variety of Spanish that can be heard in Latin America in general, and in Argentina in particular. Although there is much that is in general use, there are significant differences, including, for example, the use of *vos* instead of *tú* in Argentine Spanish.

The localised materials included websites frequently used in Argentine daily life, such as *www.pedidosya.com*, a website used for ordering food to be delivered; public transport websites; and websites to buy clothes, to mention but a few. Participants

navigated these and other websites during class time and worked on a lexical level with them.

Syllabus

The course was organised in modules. Each module consisted of a total of 12 hours with two possible timetables: 12 60-minute lessons or eight 90-minute lessons, taught three times and twice a week respectively.

Although the lessons were remotely taught, interaction among participants was built into the lesson design and encouraged in both contexts (i.e. Group A and Group B). As interaction is considered essential for language learning, care was taken to ensure plenty of pair and group work had been planned for.

The remote teachers

Remote teachers were specifically recruited for this pilot project. The requirements were the following:

- A degree and wide experience in language teaching
- Significant experience in teaching online
- Education and background in the teaching of Spanish as a second or foreign language.

Analysis and reflections

What follows is an analysis of the pilot project in Argentina, comparing this with the experience described in the British Council report *Language for Resilience: The Role of Language in Enhancing the Resilience of Syrian Refugees and Host Communities* (Capstick and Delaney, 2016).

Communication difficulties

At the beginning of the project, a mismatch between the expected level of Spanish and the participants' real levels became evident. Originally, the pilot project had been planned for Syrian refugees who were expected to have a basic level of Spanish. However, participants from Afghanistan and Turkey subsequently joined, some of whom did not speak Arabic or English. Initially, therefore, the teachers' instructions were all in Spanish and while some of the participants were able to follow, there were those who needed explanations and instructions in English, and others who did not speak English and resorted to other participants' explanations in their home language.

Recommendations to cater for this include asking participants in advance to stipulate their knowledge of Spanish, English and any other languages they speak. With this information, a document can be

distributed with the most common instructions in Spanish, including icons to help with comprehension, along with translations in their home languages. This information can then be used as a reference in lessons and can include tasks that will contribute to learning, such as links to online dictionaries and other resources.

Expectations of teachers and learners

One of the remote teachers noted that some of the participants did not show the qualities or characteristics typically found in a language learner. There seemed to be a mismatch between some teachers' and students' expectations. This was mainly due to some participants not having learned another language, or only having done so in a non-formal setting. Cultural differences also played a part, with some teachers and learners having different expectations of, for example, interaction patterns. Recordings made of lessons show how some participants did not feel comfortable being asked to interact with others. It was necessary to address these issues in class and guide participants to what was expected from them.

Materials

During the pilot it became clear that the materials did not fully take into account all of the special needs of refugees. The materials were designed to provide participants with the linguistic-discursive resources they needed to integrate into society. However, observation of recorded lessons and feedback from teachers and learners showed that more needed to be done to help the refugees with integration, and that some activities typically found in general language courses are not appropriate or relevant in this context. For instance, many Spanish language courses have the needs of tourists as their focus. As valuable as some of these activities may be for language learning, they are not relevant in this context and it is useful to ensure materials are directly relevant and help the participants interact in society.

Technical difficulties

The pilot experienced some technical difficulties. It generally took a few minutes for the lesson to get started and, quite often, participants had trouble connecting, their microphones did not work properly or they could not hear the teacher well. This resulted in valuable class time being wasted. This was due to participants from home (Group A) using a variety of equipment and variable Internet connections to connect to *Zoom*.

It helped to have instructions available on the first slide of each lesson, with details the participants needed in order to connect successfully. Participants were also given prior instructions on how to prepare

to connect. It is recommended that five to ten minutes extra are built in before starting a lesson, in order to give time for participants to connect and settle in. In this way, when it is time to start the lesson proper, everybody will be ready.

Reflections on pedagogy

As for pedagogical aspects, some lessons had a clear linguistic focus whereas others lent themselves more naturally to interaction; for instance, interacting with shopkeepers or at the hospital or doctor's. Participants responded differently, with higher participation and involvement, when they could relate the Spanish to their own lives. This included, for example, shopping for clothes or buying food, among other functions. It also became helpful to keep a record of unexpected outcomes and queries that cropped up during the lessons. While they were answered on the spot, recording them meant they could usefully be incorporated into subsequent lesson plans, or used as valuable input for teacher reflection.

A decision was made in the planning not to make homework a required part of the course. However, it became apparent that this could have been beneficial. For example, participants could have been asked to watch interactions between Spanish speakers, with a clear focus on functional language such as greetings and supermarket transactions, among others. Possible tasks might have included asking participants to keep a record of words, phrases or expressions that attracted their attention or which they did not completely understand.

Participants also asked for 'written practice', by which they usually meant help with grammar in the form of written exercises. Although such practice does not necessarily guarantee fluency, it can bolster students' confidence. Though ready-made materials can be used, the need exists for exercises to relate the grammar topics to the participants' immediate context and topics they are dealing with in their lives.

The teachers

As stated above, remote teachers on this project needed to meet specific prerequisites. Experience of the pilot project showed that other features were essential as well:

- Ability to deal with the unexpected, helping participants benefit from it, while, at the same time, managing to work with the syllabus.
- Capacity to spot learning opportunities. The following three areas were identified as being important: cultural aspects, personalisation of learning, and making use of information about the participants' home language.

Cultural aspects

Regarding cultural aspects, it was found that the participants became more actively involved in class when they talked about differences between the cultural context they were experiencing now and how this differed from their cultural context at home. It became useful for teachers to help participants notice Argentine cultural traits in their everyday interactions, and to ask them to compare these with their own culture. This created interesting and meaningful interactions with the teacher and among participants as well, since they came from different countries or from different places in Syria. Future courses could usefully make more of this, with participants' life experiences back home becoming an integral feature of lessons.

Use of mother tongue

As to the participants' home language, there were instances in the lessons of participants talking about features of their home languages, in particular with reference to pronunciation. While some of the teachers addressed these on the spot, it would be helpful in the future to systematically incorporate discussion of this in the materials.

Participant feedback

Feedback from the participants was positive. After initially trying to learn Spanish on his own, Okba Azizi from Syria said that most of what he found was "*the Spanish of Spain*" and he found the experience difficult and it did not help him communicate well, indicating that "*the language of real life is not in books.*" After this, Okba joined the remote language course, which was the first time he had studied anything online. He said that, thanks to the course, he could use communicative Spanish in daily life and highlighted "the flexibility of the classes" as being an aspect he particularly liked. Another participant, Burak Ors, said he believed that taking this course would be very helpful for anyone who found themselves in the same situation as him.

Conclusion

To conclude, the previous section has already discussed some lessons learned and recommendations for improving future iterations of the project in Argentina, as well as providing information that could be applied to other contexts. In balance, the remote teaching of Spanish to refugees offered an innovative solution to providing language lessons for dispersed groups of people that otherwise may have proven difficult or impossible to do, and provided evidence that remote teaching can help reduce some of the access barriers that frequently constitute an obstacle to learning. Using tailor-made materials to meet participants' linguistic needs, personalisation, and situating the focus of

lessons on the context and reality the refugees find themselves in were all positive aspects of the pilot. Aspects that could be improved on include placing an even greater emphasis on ensuring the language and lessons are targeted towards helping them with the practical realities of integrating into society in Argentina.

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19

Language For Resilience: Remote Teacher Training To Iraq

Verónica Pintos and Silvia Rovegno

Introduction

Building resilience in times of prolonged crisis is “the process of improving an individual or community’s capacity to cope with and recover from conditions that risk worsening their situation or slowing their emergence from crisis” (British Council, 2016). Capstick and Delaney (2016:6) found that “language is an essential component in enhancing the resilience of individuals, communities and institutions” and identified five interconnected ways in which this was the case:

- Developing home language and literacy: creating the foundations for shared identity, belonging and future study.
- Access to education, training and employment.
- Learning together and social cohesion: language-learning activities as a basis for developing individual resilience, ensuring dignity, self-sufficiency and life skills.
- Addressing the effects of trauma on learning: language programmes as support and as a means to address loss, displacement and trauma.
- Building the capacity of teachers and strengthening educational systems.

This case study examines how remote teacher training (i.e. training delivered via videoconferencing) can be used as a viable alternative to traditional instruction in circumstances when it is not possible to implement it face to face. It describes the experience of a remote teacher training programme delivered to teachers teaching refugees in Duhok, in the Kurdistan region of Northern Iraq.

Background

Iraq has been seriously damaged by over 30 years of conflict, and the country is now host to a large number of Syrian refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). The project described here was designed and delivered by the British Council Argentina Remote Teaching Centre (RTC). The

trainees were classroom teachers of English working with vulnerable young adults in refugee communities affected by conflict. These teachers were employed by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) working in partnership with the Directorate of Vocational Training, Dohuk.

Project aims

The project’s main aim was to help the NRC-employed teachers deliver an effective blended English course. The remote teacher trainers were to help the teachers both with teaching English face to face in classrooms and supporting their learners with the self-access part of the course.

Participants

The following participants were involved in the project:

- **Remote trainers:** Three teacher trainers from the RTC, provided 12 hours of training and 12-hour follow-up support sessions to eight teachers. The remote trainers were also in charge of guiding local facilitators with the implementation of the project *in situ*.
- **Local facilitator:** A member of NRC staff who supported the remote trainers during the teacher training and follow-up support sessions. The facilitator also led a one-hour session with teachers prior to them joining remotely for the main three-hour training session. Here, the facilitator’s main task was to lead the teachers in a warm-up discussion related to the contents of that day’s training session.
- **Teachers:** Eight Iraqi university teachers recruited by NRC took part in the teacher training course and follow-up sessions.

Course design

The syllabus and materials were developed after a needs analysis was undertaken by the NRC. Activities

were organised around a task-based approach given that the trainee teachers expressed their interest in learning more about a communicative approach to language learning and how to adapt this to a blended learning context.

The materials included short videos on teaching listening and speaking skills; reading and discussion of articles on blended learning, the communicative approach and task based learning; and reflective tasks on how this related to the participants' teaching context.

Implementation

The 12-hour teacher training programme was delivered remotely, using *Zoom* videoconferencing software (<http://zoom.us>). The NRC teachers and facilitator were located in the NRC training facility in Dohuk. Their training room was equipped with a widescreen monitor and a computer with a standard internet connection.



Figure 1: Teachers in Dohuk during a remote teacher training session.

Phase one

During phase one, the remote trainers (RTs) introduced the main characteristics of blended learning so that the participants could become familiar with the modality that was to be implemented in their classrooms. At the same time the RTs demonstrated how to use the self-access materials in a face-to-face context and guided them through the process of helping students to use and interact with these materials effectively.

Phase two

In phase two, the follow-up sessions were carried out to help teachers reflect upon their teaching practices and provide them with support troubleshooting the everyday problems that might occur.

Research strategy

After the course had finished, in-depth interviews were carried out with six of the eight course participants and the local facilitator in order to

assess the impact that the remote teacher training course had on the teachers who participated in the programme. The two other participants had left the area and were not contactable.

Analysis

Because the language of the teachers was mostly B1 (CEFR), closed questions were used to gather specific data about the programme and only a few questions elicited the open opinions of participants. Only two of the participants showed a command of the language at an advanced level and were able to express and share their experiences with fluency and clarity.

The interviews examined how effectively the course suited the needs of the local teaching community and how far this was achieved by the course design and implementation. When asked about the aspects they would highlight from their remote training experience, all participants agreed that this remote training allowed them to gain access to knowledge that was very different from the methodologies taught in their teacher training college in Kurdistan.

One participant said: *“Here in our country teaching is like spoon feeding. The students listen and the teacher talks, and talks and talks. Instead of that, now we focus on group work. Our remote trainer helped me ... understand the benefits of the group work, and making the student work more than the teacher. I was not a teacher; I was more a facilitator than a teacher. I prepared materials for them, and gave them questions, topics for debate and they had to work with them or do research on them to learn. This was a completely new way of working for my students. At first they didn't know how to work, but slowly and surely they were able to engage in learning in a different and more effective way.”*

The second aspect that participants identified as being a positive feature of this remote training was the possibility of having contact with trainers and teachers from other parts of the world and learning about their experiences. This intercultural aspect was highlighted by the course facilitator: *“It was an enriching experience because we had the time to share our differences about learning and teaching in Argentina and Kurdistan. So it's not only about the actual content. We had the time to discuss all the aspects. That was very interesting as well”.*

Another aspect mentioned by a third of our interviewees was that remote teaching made possible what was locally impossible to achieve. The local facilitator reflected upon this issue: *“We decided to conduct a programme, a youth project, but this would have been impossible without the British Council's remote training. We need to have a revolution in teaching. We don't want to make students bored. Teaching is not the way it was before. The table is upside down now. The library and the books we*

used to read, every day, this is not happening anymore. In ten years, I expect the libraries will be electronic. I would expect that remote teaching could be less expensive, it saves time; you don't have to travel to the UK or to the USA or travel anywhere to get educated. You might get educated while you're at home. You can follow up with instructions and with email communication."

When asked about the particular features that made this remote teaching effective, two clear answers emerged: the methodology employed and the materials. When referring to the remote training methodology, participants acknowledge that the remote training resembled face-to-face training. This, they reported, was achieved by its synchronous mode, the interactive qualities of the platform used and the role of the facilitator. One participant explained how both the RT and the facilitator helped in their training: *"In the face-to-face sessions, the facilitator is able to move and to have eye contact with everyone in the room to create an active session through movement and through communication. The facilitator's role during the first hour of the intro, was not only getting us mentally prepared for the remote session, getting us ready for the content to discuss materials, but also to help the remote trainer, to support us, ask questions and also to convey our messages when we didn't know the words in English. So, sometimes we started to ask questions, but they are not clear. Because I am from the same background, the same region and area, we could understand each other better. I could try to convey their questions and their messages to the remote trainer."*

The flexibility of trainers in providing support and expanding on issues participants were more interested in, along with the design of the materials, was highlighted as being an effective element of the remote training. One participant recalled: *"Through the pre-reading process, we did our part at home, went through the materials, but then when we came to the actual sessions, we had one hour to get into the training, kind of the introduction, going through the materials, the subjects. We had the time to discuss face to face and then have the remote trainers, they were really engaged"*.

Conclusions

This remote training was offered as a solution to a situation where insecurity and war made it impossible for trainers to be present physically. It gave teachers in Kurdistan the chance to both enhance their existing skills and develop new teaching skills and methodologies in order to better help hundreds of refugees develop their English language competency. The effectiveness of this remote training was mentioned by all interviewees. In particular, they highlighted that the synchronous videoconferencing training sessions allowed

interaction between participants and trainer, the existence of a local facilitator that supported the work of the remote trainer, and the specific materials used in training.

Resilience can be built through language education by engaging with the host community to help them ensure wellbeing; providing access to education and other basic services which will help refugees in their academic advancement; and teaching life skills, such as public speaking, listening and computer skills.

Above all, this type of remote training enables access to further education and training to local communities that would otherwise not be available in fragile and vulnerable states. It can help establish connections with professionals and people in different parts of the world that are brought together to achieve a common goal. Remote training can also promote intercultural understanding and is an effective way for teachers to continue on the path of professional development, especially when choices are limited *in situ*.

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20

***Cuauhtémoc* Connected: remote language teaching to Mexican secondary schools**

Verónica Pintos and Julieta Cabrera

This case study reports on *Cuauhtémoc Connected*, a project connecting remote language teachers in Argentina with secondary students in Mexico. This case study describes the context in which the project took place, explores the project's achievements and examines the lessons learnt so far.

Background

Pre-dating videoconferencing, *Telesecundaria* was a late 1960s Mexican project that used TV programmes for instruction. Secondary students watched purpose-made educational television programmes through the TV channel *EDUSAT* as one of the components of the course. The initiative was first implemented in Mexico because students were lagging behind in small rural areas where schools could not be built. In 1993, when the Government established secondary education as compulsory, video instruction resurfaced as a way of universalising access to this level of instruction. *Telesecundaria's* main purpose was to guarantee compulsory secondary school education, especially in underprivileged rural locations. It also aimed to provide equal educational opportunities to students, which would later translate into equivalent social opportunities (Santos, 2001).

Santos (ibid) questions the effectiveness of the aforementioned project, arguing that the social and economic background of students plays an important part in how they develop and perform intellectual functions, such as reading comprehension or mathematical skills. The students from said underprivileged rural areas learning through TV programmes scored lower in tests compared to those receiving instruction in the traditional way, thus reinforcing and reproducing social inequality.

Other studies take a more socio-constructivist view of education and focus on the efficacy of such projects. Authors supporting this view highlight the benefits of *Telesecundaria* and how the incorporation of information and communication technologies

(ICTs) can add to student and teacher performance. Porrás Hernández, López Hernández and Huerta Alva (2009) state that the humanist vision on the integration of ICT across the curriculum favours constructivist learning, in which students are presented either with a project or a problem-solving situation to work on, with their teacher as a guide. This type of learning nurtures the use of technology as a means of communication and as a tool to foster cultural identity.

Among the advantages mentioned, the use of TV programmes in education has been said to favour the incorporation of technology into lesson routines; has redefined the role of teachers, who co-ordinate and guide students in their learning process; and has helped students develop innovative and independent practices (Porrás Hernández et al., 2009).

Research strategy

In order to learn more about the project and its implementation, data was collected through semi-structured interviews using web-conferencing software. Participants for the interviews were selected because of their involvement: one facilitator, one project co-ordinator and two remote teachers were interviewed, to represent the standpoint of different aspects of the direct implementation of the project. This qualitative data is analysed below and can be considered as representative of *Cuauhtémoc Connected*.

Cuauhtémoc Connected

Cuauhtémoc Connected, the videoconferencing (VC) project developed by the British Council for Mexico, resembles the model presented by Roberts (2009), where students received online instruction in a special VC room, with a VC co-ordinator who oversaw the administration of assessment, the provision of materials and supported students. Roberts' approach to videoconferencing seems to have overcome the limitations of projects such as *Telesecundaria* by

incorporating a humanistic perspective into the teaching and learning of languages, helping to foster meaningful communication between teachers and students in the pursuit of developing projects or solving common problems. *Cuauhtémoc Connected* was conceived by the authorities of the area (*delegación*) of Cuauhtémoc, located in the northern part of Mexico City. The area is Mexico's historic birthplace, and the cultural centre of Mexico City.

Aims

The students offered lessons came from vulnerable, low socio-economic areas in Cuauhtémoc. Initially, the project was designed with the aim of providing these students with opportunities to learn and speak English to develop communication skills and a sense of global citizenship. The project co-ordinator told us they wanted to show them “*that English can be useful ... in real life and a tool to change their perspective, to give them access to better opportunities.*” The Mexican Ministry of Education established that they wanted students to reach a B1 level of language proficiency as defined in the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) by the end of the project.

Curriculum and lesson design

A needs analysis was undertaken, and lessons designed around projects and topics shown to be relevant and of interest to the students' lives.

Project roles

Five main roles were identified. In Argentina, these were the remote teaching centre (RTC) co-ordinator and the remote teachers. In Mexico, the main roles were the project co-ordinator, the local facilitator and the head teachers at the school. Their main responsibilities are outlined in the table below

Table 1: Argentina roles' responsibilities

Role	Responsibilities
RTC Co-ordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supervising lesson delivery and project operations in Argentina Co-ordinating with Project Co-ordinator in Mexico Supporting remote teachers academically Writing/revising course content and lesson plans Assigning substitute teachers in case of absence Co-ordinating between remote teachers and face-to-face facilitators Monitoring and evaluation of teaching quality

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remote teachers Teaching remote lessons according to syllabus Adapting lesson plans to specific groups' needs Attendance record-keeping Assessment of learning
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In Mexico, the main roles were the project co-ordinator, the local facilitator, classroom assistants and the head teachers at the school. Their main responsibilities are summarised below:

Table 2: Mexico roles' responsibilities

Role	Responsibilities
Project Co-ordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supervising lesson delivery and project operations in Mexico Co-ordinating with RTC Co-ordinator in Argentina Relationship management with head teachers Management of Facilitators and classroom assistants Needs analysis of students and schools Writing/revising course content and lesson plans Co-ordinating activities with remote teachers and face-to-face facilitators Monitoring and evaluation at schools
Face-to-face facilitators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-ordinating with remote teachers to plan lessons and weekly cycle Assisting the remote teachers during lessons Classroom management of students and space
Head teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managing timetables Managing facilitators Providing school facilities Communicating with parents

Phases

The proposal had a pilot and four subsequent phases:

- Pilot phase with a select group of secondary students in November 2015
- Phase 1 in three secondary schools (March to July 2016)
- Phase 2 with the same three secondary schools (September 2016 to February 2017)
- Phase 3 with the same three schools (March to July 2017)
- Phase 4 was planned to start in September 2017

but due to the earthquake that hit Mexico City and destroyed many buildings in the *Cuauhtémoc* delegation, including two schools, classes had to be cancelled

- 2018 – Phase 4 eventually restarted in late January 2018, resuming lessons in only one school with 18 classes

In each of the phases, feedback was collected from students, remote teachers and facilitators, and changes were subsequently made to improve the materials, the frequency of remote language lessons and the role of the facilitator in the face-to-face lessons.

Project reach

By the beginning of 2017, more than 1,000 1st, 2nd and 3rd year students distributed in 48 classes from three secondary schools had received *level 1* remote lessons. In 2017–18, the project added *level 2* lessons for students who had already taken part in 2015–16. However, after the 2017 earthquake, the numbers of schools participating in the project was reduced to one, as the other two schools suffered partial or almost total building destruction.

Lessons learnt from the pilot phase

More than 100 students from five different secondary schools received 30 hours of English language instruction delivered in three-hour lessons on Saturdays. The pilot was offered to students who had performed well in their secondary schools. Throughout the pilot stage, the students followed a textbook that students were provided with as part of the scholarship they were awarded. The British Council Mexico appointed local facilitators to assist students during the remote lessons and to help remote teachers with classroom management.

The pilot showed the role of the facilitator to be crucial. Facilitators who were also teachers provided additional support in the classroom, better encouraged participation and actively monitored group work as well as being more effective when it came to other classroom management tasks, such as appointing students to participate. As a result of this, local secondary school teachers with a minimum of B1 level of English were chosen to facilitate and to manage the VC equipment.

Phases 1 and 2

In the two phases after the project pilot, remote lessons were taught to all students in three secondary schools, complementing the existing curricular English lessons that students received. A weekly cycle was introduced, with a weekly remote lesson and two face-to-face lessons.

Phases 3 and 4

Further evaluation on the effectiveness of the lessons led to an increase in the number of English lessons taught to the students. The students now had a four-lesson cycle, comprising three face-to-face English lessons and one remote lesson.

During the cycle, the students worked on the same topic. The remote lesson, as described by one of the remote teachers “*was basically used as the trigger to learning more about the topic in an interactive, attractive way, with videos and songs and with speaking activities that contribute to building meaningful conversations.*” Much was also made of the remote lesson allowing the students contact with teachers from distant locations, and with cultural background different from theirs. This characteristic of remote lessons, as one of the facilitators remarked “*enhanced the students’ perception of themselves as global citizens, allowing them to establish meaningful communication and exchange of cultural traits with teachers from foreign countries.*”

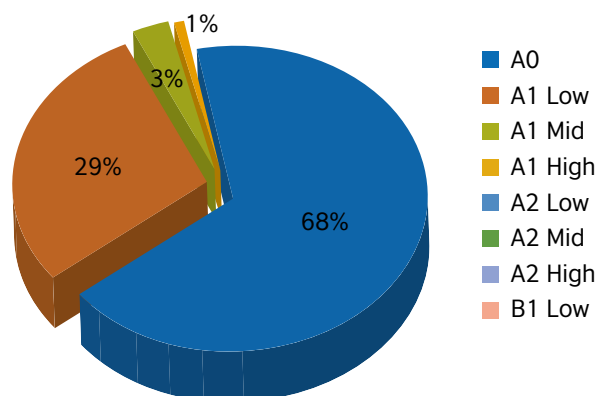
The face-to-face lesson was the core class in which the students learned the grammar and vocabulary necessary to work collaboratively and they often prepared posters or worked on other projects to be presented in the remote lesson.

Results and reflections

A survey at the end of the pilot phase was carried out with the students to learn how they assessed their performance in the project. More than 90 per cent of the students stated their level of English proficiency had improved.

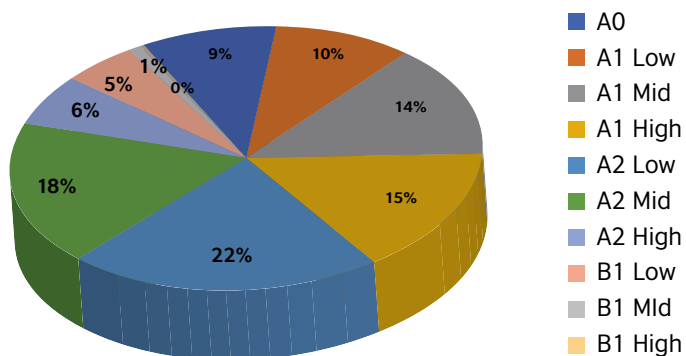
A diagnostic test was undertaken before the pilot phase, which 82% (926 out of 1,126) students took. The results of this (see 2016 pie chart below) showed that 67% of students had a very low level of linguistic competence (A0).

i) Diagnostic test results (Sep 2016)



At the end of phase 4, the same test was given to the students. This time the results showed significant improvement (see 2018 pie chart below), although low attendance levels meant that 22% of students still tested at A0 level. Not surprisingly, most progress was made by students who attended regularly, with 6% of students showing a result in the B1 band. Overall, there was an increase in the linguistic level of students.

ii) Phase 4 test results (Jun 2018)



Conclusions

The main aim of the project was to give Mexican students in Cuauhtémoc area the opportunity to meet other speakers of English as well as to learn and practise their communicative skills in different way. If it were not for RLT, these students would scarcely have had the opportunity to do this, not to mention to travel around the world to meet other English speakers.

The teachers interviewed for this case study considered the experience to have been enriching and valuable, mainly because they all had the opportunity to meet other teachers of English and share ideas and teaching practices. One of the facilitators reported: *“I loved teaching with the other teachers, in this case remote teachers. The remote teachers worked hard to prepare their lessons and make the lessons interesting for the students. I learnt a lot from them”*. They were able to see how others teach the language and how they manage classrooms. In the case of the remote teachers involved, it was the first time they were presented with the challenge of teaching teenagers remotely.

As for the facilitators, the *Cuauhtémoc Connected* project was a positive experience: *“The parents of the teens were very thankful for the opportunity their children had been given”*. They reported that the students’ interest in learning the language had been boosted as well as their interest in other cultures, in other ways of living. As for the British Council Mexico project co-ordinator, *“these students now know not only about English but other cultures as well”*.

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Research Methodology

Verónica Pintos and Silvia Rovegno

This chapter outlines the research methodology that was implemented in this publication. When appropriate, details of specific research strategies are included in each chapter to facilitate the readers' understanding.

Research questions

The research reported in this publication aimed to answer these two broad questions:

- To what extent is remote language teaching (RLT) appropriate to different contexts?
- How is remote language teaching effectively implemented?

Main context of study: *Ceibal en Inglés*

The *Ceibal en Inglés* primary remote language teaching programme reaches children aged 9-11 from primary state schools. "The goal of the programme is to teach English to state primary school children in grades 4 to 6 taking them from absolute beginners (A0) to an A2 level approximately" (Brovetto, 2013:1). This programme was developed jointly by the Ceibal foundation in Uruguay, an independent government body responsible for technology integration at all levels of compulsory education in Uruguay, and the British Council, which designed the materials and accordance with the syllabi of the intended levels, designed and implemented the quality management system and manages or directly delivers approximately 70% of the remote lessons. The programme entered a phase of universalization in the primary state sector for years 4, 5 and 6 in 2015. Currently, there are over 3,300 groups working with 317 remote teachers belonging to 18 different institutions distributed in 4 countries with varying degrees of participation in the project.

Research Paradigm

The research adopted an exploratory paradigm with a dual focus: descriptive and interpretative. That is, its aim was to describe remote language teaching and identify the factors that make it successful. It required a mixed approach, combining, when appropriate, quantitative with qualitative data to enrich the understanding of the phenomena and to allow the voices of the participants to be heard and taken into consideration. In each instance of qualitative research, three sources of data collection were used to ensure validity and reliability of the results obtained (data and method triangulation). The design was cross-sectional in which researchers

focused on observations, interviews, and surveys of different groups at one time. No variables were manipulated and researchers recorded the information which described the characteristics that exist in those groups.

Participants (*Ceibal en Inglés*)

After stating acceptance to participate in the research, participants signed a consent form which disclosed the objective of the research work, what was required of them, and their rights as participants. All consent forms were filed and stored at the respective British Council offices.

- **Classroom Teacher (CT):** The teacher (in the *Ceibal en Inglés* case studies) in charge of the group is usually a graduate of *Magisterio*, with no or little knowledge of English. CTs help RTs in the delivery of lesson A and are responsible for carrying out lessons B and C with the aid of detailed lesson plans and assistance from RTs via weekly coordination sessions. A total of 300 CTs were contacted by email and 45 positive responses were received and thus participated in these instances. In the case of the survey, all CTs that dropped out of their English studies online were contacted and 52 participated in the survey. The inclusion criteria for the interviews and focus groups were the same. CTs who were identified by mentors, RTs, or English tutors as having embraced the *Ceibal en Inglés* programme and perform their role fully were invited to participate.
- **Remote Teacher (RT):** A qualified teacher of English with knowledge and experience teaching young learners, teaching from various Remote Teaching Centres (RTCs) located in Uruguay or abroad (currently Argentina, the Philippines, and the UK). RTs "are brought into the classroom remotely via videoconferencing technology to teach once a week and to help the children's existing classroom teacher" (Stanley, 2017). The RT is in charge of delivering lesson A and aiding CTs in the preparation and delivery of lessons B and C. Three focus groups were carried out and nine individual interviews were completed. Thirty five RTs responded the online survey.
- **Student:** With regards to the *Ceibal en Inglés* case studies, students refers to primary school children of grades 4 to 6 (age 9-11) studying in state schools across the whole of Uruguay, in urban and rural areas. Eight focus groups were carried out with 6th grade students currently completing level 3 of *Ceibal en Inglés*. These students were selected because they have had three years'

experience in the programme and because it was felt they had the cognitive maturity to reflect upon the experience. School distribution followed the overall school distribution in the programme. Participating classes were selected by *Ceibal en Inglés* mentors and were chosen because they had attended more than 70% of the remote lessons in the current year. A total of one hundred students participated in these focus groups.

- **RLT manager:** British Council Managers, Members of ANEP (the Board of Public Education in Uruguay), *Ceibal en Inglés* management staff, Directors of Study, and Coordinators at associated institutions who deliver remote lessons for *Ceibal en Inglés*. remote teaching managers working in the project during the duration of this research were interviewed for this research work.
- **Mentor:** English language professional that support the role of the Classroom teachers in *Ceibal en Inglés*.
- **Researcher:** Two part-time Research Managers (Verónica Pintos and Silvia Rovegno) were in charge over the period of two years and a half of designing the research project, design the data collection tools, conducting a literature review in relevant areas, undertaking field work, analysing the data gathered and writing the bulk of the chapters of this publication. One Research Manager was based in Argentina and focused mainly on issues concerning the remote teachers' points of view and experience. The second Research Manager was located in Uruguay and focused mainly on the impact remote teaching has in the school, on the students and on the community as a whole. The Research Manager in Argentina was also employed part-time as Quality Coordinator for the British Council Argentina and is an experienced remote teacher.

Data collection tools

Four main data collection tools were used: semi-structured interviews, focus groups, surveys and document analysis.

Semi-structured interviews used a combination of pre-prepared guiding questions and prompts with the chance for the interviewee to elaborate on issues in an exploratory manner (Dörnyei, 2007). This allowed us to understand individual experiences in more detail and elaborate on different issues in depth with each interviewee. Interviews were carried out with managers, classroom teachers and remote teachers.

Focus groups allowed participants to think together, inspire and challenge each other, reacting

to emerging issues and points (Dörnyei, 2007). This enabled us to explore issues in more depth of analysis, merging individual experiences to obtain a collective understanding. Focus groups were carried out with classroom teachers, remote teachers and students.

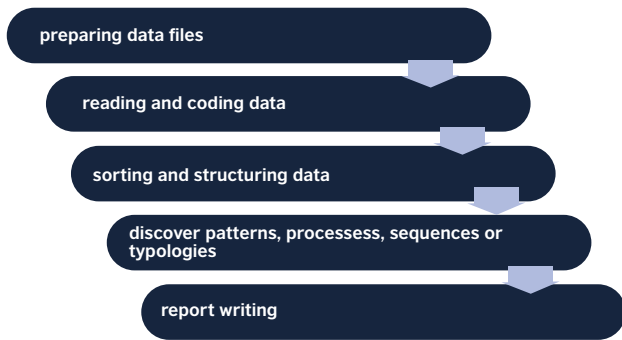
Surveys aimed at identifying characteristics and experiences of aspects of remote teaching that emerged from the interviews.

Key documents in the programme were analysed. Such documents included institute protocols, the quality management handbook, remote lesson observation reports, quality management reports, and the adaptive test results reports.

Data analysis strategy

Three forms of analysis were used in this work; i) quantitative descriptive statistics, ii) qualitative content analysis and iii) paradigmatic analysis.

- **Quantitative descriptive statistics:** Factual data from interviewees and schools was analysed this way as well as responses from surveys. "Descriptive statistics do exactly what they say: they describe and present data, for example, in terms of summary frequencies. Such statistics make no inferences or predictions, they simply report what has been found, in a variety of ways." (Cohen et al, 2006, pp. 504)
- Three measures were used for analysis; two of central tendency (mean and mode) and one of variability (standard deviation). The *Excel* statistical package was used to make all statistical calculations.
- **Qualitative content analysis:** The transcriptions of the interviews and focus groups were analysed in this way. The software *Atlas.ti* was used for this analysis to facilitate the manipulation and comparison of the transcriptions, the code generation and visualization of results. For data transcription, a professional independent data transcriber was employed in order to enhance the quality the transcriptions and maximise the use of time. Spot-checking of transcriptions was carried out by both the transcriber and researchers. The process of coding involves "highlighting extracts of the transcribed data and labelling these in a way that they can be easily identified, retrieved or grouped" (Dörnyei, 2007, pp. 250). A code is therefore understood as "a label attached to a chunk of text to make the particular piece of information manageable and malleable" (ibid). The whole process of qualitative content analysis can be summarised as follows:



- **Paradigmatic analysis:** This form of analysis is defined as “(the) analysis of the “content” of narratives or what they say about their subject matter” (Polkinghorne, in Barkhuizen et al, 2014:75). Each interview or focus group is considered as a form of oral narrative of the experience of the participants.

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Glossary

Academic Manager (AM)

The Academic Manager's main job in a Remote Teaching Centre is to work on quality management, training and development, line management, recruitment, teacher leadership, and coordination of Teacher Coordinators.

APRENDER schools

In Uruguay, schools are classified on a scale of 1-5, the first quintile being the 20% of schools with the highest vulnerability level and the last being the 20% with the lowest vulnerability level. (ANEP, 2016, pp. 4-5)¹ Schools belonging to quintiles 1 and 2 are denominated *APRENDER (Atención Prioritaria en Entornos con Dificultades Estructurales Relativas*, which means *priority attention to environments/contexts with structural difficulties* in English). They are located in vulnerable socio-economic contexts and have a more complex social situation than the rest of urban schools (*Escuelas Urbanas Comunes*), which belong to quintiles 3,4 and 5.

Ceibal en Inglés

Remote language teaching blended-learning programme which focuses on teaching English as a foreign language to Uruguayan primary school children using a combination of remote lessons via VC equipment and activities on a LMS and which is based on a cycle of three lessons (one remote lesson delivered by a Remote Teacher and two face-to-face lessons facilitated by the Classroom Teacher).

Classroom Teacher (CT)

Primary School Teachers participating in *Ceibal en Inglés* from all provinces of Uruguay and teaching at all types of schools (urban, rural, priority attention). These teachers facilitate language learning to some 80,000 students. In order to become a classroom teacher at a state school, individuals must possess an initial teaching degree, specialising in primary education.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

Equality is about treating people fairly, impartially and without bias and creating conditions in the workplace and wider society that encourage and value diversity and promote dignity and inclusion.

Diversity is an inclusive concept concerned with creating an environment supported by practices which benefit all members of an organization or state. It takes account of the fact that people, whilst

similar in many ways, differ from one another in various ways including (but not exclusively) on the basis of gender, age, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, physical ability, mental capacity, religion and belief, education, economic status, personality, communication style and approaches to work.

Inclusion is the act of making all groups of people within a society feel valued and important.

Facilitator

An English language professional or general educational professional who acts in the remote lesson as liaison between the students and the remote teacher. He/she is physically present at the students' end and monitors their work providing feedback and establishing backchannels with the remote teacher to ensure a quality remote lesson

Learning Management System (LMS)

A learning management system (LMS) is a software application for online lesson delivery which allows teachers to create, change, assign, track, report and deliver courses. Often also referred to as Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) or Content Management System (CMS).

Plan Ceibal

Plan Ceibal is a Uruguayan institution that works to promote technological inclusion in educational settings. This is achieved by the development of software and applications geared towards local needs, the handing-out of equipment and the training of educators and students in their use.

Quality Coordinator (QC)

The QC role is in a Remote Teaching Centre (RTC) and the main duties include promoting and ensuring high quality and effective RLT, implementation of a RT observation scheme for evaluation, development of RTs' teaching skills, monitoring of teaching delivery, mentoring RTs, ensuring maintenance of quality standards, and communicating and liaising with the client, the RTC Coordinator, and the Quality Managers.

Remote Language Teaching

Remote language teaching is the synchronous teaching of any language using either videoconferencing equipment or web conferencing software to reach geographically remote locations around the world. The language lesson is delivered in collaboration with a classroom teacher or a facilitator, who team-teaches with the remote teacher.

Remote lesson

A remote lesson is defined as any synchronous lesson that is delivered using either videoconferencing equipment or web conferencing software to reach geographically remote locations around the world. A remote lesson is delivered in collaboration with another professional in the field of education (denominated classroom teacher or facilitator) who team-teaches with the remote teacher and is physically present where students are located.

Remote teacher (RT)

The teacher of English who delivers classes synchronously using VC equipment from a distant location and asynchronously via a learning management system.

Remote Teaching Centre (RTC)

A Remote Teaching Centre is a language school or institute that delivers remote lessons to geographically remote locations.

Rural school

Primary schools located in, for example, rural areas of Uruguay. Students who attend these schools receive the traditional primary education alongside skills and knowledge which are specifically needed in a rural environment.

Special Educational needs (SEN)

Special educational needs refer to the existence of a disability or learning difficulty which calls for special provisions in educational settings.

Teacher coordinator (TC)

A Teacher Coordinator is a senior remote teacher (RT) who supports operational delivery of remote lessons, supervises remote teaching, acts as a duty officer, and line manages RTs. In order to become a TC, the RT should demonstrate teacher leadership skills, who will ensure that all teachers work in alignment with the British Council mission and values.

Video Conference Equipment

Equipment used during live videoconferencing sessions. It requires at both ends the presence of a screen, a camera, a microphone, a streaming device and a high-speed internet connection.

Virtual Learning Environment

See Learning Management System (LMS)

Team Teaching

Team teaching, viewed as adults sharing responsibilities in terms of co-planning, co-teaching and co-managing the classroom, as well as delivering instruction. In Uruguay, it includes two teachers managing the same group of students, synchronously, from two different physical spaces

Child Protection

The act of protecting children from maltreatment. Child protection for the British Council includes protecting children from physical, emotional, sexual, or negligent treatment.

Quality Management

Quality management at project scale determines the expected standards for the delivery of remote teaching by identifying the needs of Ceibal en Inglés and designing, developing, and managing processes to evaluate these standards. In contrast, the management of quality in a RTC focuses more on internal assurance and control systems designed to provide and improve delivery of high-quality remote teaching services.

Contributors

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Robert Chatfield started teaching English in 1993 and taught in Eastern Europe, the UK and Spain before moving to Argentina and doing a DELTA () in 1997. He moved into educational management before returning to the UK to do an MBA in 2002 - 2003, which he passed with distinction. He then worked in healthcare for 15 years, running a successful UK based international private business in the orthopaedics sector. He joined the British Council in 2016, with the task of managing the Remote Teaching Centre in Buenos Aires – which delivers over 35,000 hours of remote teaching per year. He is currently the British Council Remote Teaching Lead for the Americas.

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Pablo Toledo graduated as a teacher of English in Argentina (*IES Joaquín V González*) and has a diploma in Education Policy from *Universidad Torcuato di Tella*. He worked for the British Council between 2013 and 2018, where he coordinated the design and construction of the Remote Teaching Centre in Buenos Aires, which he also managed. He currently works for Cambridge Assessment English.

Remote Teaching is a collection of articles, research papers and case studies that offers readers insight into live online language teaching and teacher education. Many of the chapters focus on *Ceibal en Inglés*, an innovative programme teaching primary children in Uruguay. Others take a more general view, and there are also case studies from the UK, Argentina, Mexico and Iraq.

Graham Stanley, the editor of this publication, is the British Council's English for Educational Systems Lead for the Americas. Prior to that he was Country Director British Council Uruguay, working in partnership with Plan Ceibal on *Ceibal en Inglés*.

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