

REMOTE LANGUAGE TEACHING AND CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Remote language teaching, the innovative practice of teaching a language interactively via videoconferencing, requires an innovative approach to continuing professional development (CPD) for those teaching remotely. This chapter looks at how remote teaching is different from face-to-face classroom teaching and how that affects the approach to CPD. After taking a general look at CPD and remote teaching, the chapter uses the large-scale remote teaching project that the British Council is undertaking in Uruguay in partnership with Plan Ceibal to examine how an evidence-based approach was used to understand the needs of teachers to provide CPD based on the British Council's *Teaching for Success* framework.

Introduction

What is remote language teaching?

Remote language teaching is the practice of teaching a language interactively via videoconferencing and is, according to Kaiser (2017, p. 1) “poised to influence English language instruction throughout the world.” Just as there are differences between remote language teaching and face-to-face language teaching, there are differences in the skills a teacher needs to develop in order to become a good remote teacher. In this chapter, we will show what those differences are and how the research was undertaken in order to adapt the British Council's *Teaching for Success Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Framework* (British Council, 2015) to serve the needs of remote language teachers working in Uruguay on the *Ceibal en Inglés* programme.

Ceibal en Inglés is an education programme started in 2012 in Uruguay and is managed by the government agency Plan Ceibal in partnership with the British Council. The main aim of the programme is to cater for the shortage of English language teachers in the country's primary schools by using remote teachers based in Uruguay, Argentina, Chile, the UK and the Philippines. Six years after the programme was launched, two thirds of primary students in grades four to six (more than seventy-five thousand learners) have English lessons thanks to remote language teachers. The remote teachers (RTs) are assisted in the school by local classroom teachers (CTs), and although they do not necessarily know much English (if any),

help manage the students and learn along with the children. For more details of *Ceibal en Inglés* and other remote language teaching projects, see Stanley (2019).

Remote teachers

A remote teacher, is a teacher 'not physically present in the classroom' who teaches *live online* via videoconferencing (Brovetto, 2017, p. 65) and communicates synchronously with learners during the lesson. In addition, learners and teachers are usually connected via a Learning Management System (LMS) so learners have access to materials and self-study in-between lessons. The remote teacher uses the LMS to give feedback, post updates, mark homework and clear up any doubts asynchronously between lessons.

Because the remote teacher is not physically present in the classroom and because of the need for the teacher to manage technology (e.g. videoconferencing equipment including a camera to zoom in and zoom out; presentation software; video streaming of songs and stories; websites featuring games and other materials.), their CPD may need to be approached differently from CPD for a teacher who works in a more traditional classroom environment.

What makes good CPD?

In a very broad sense, CPD is "all natural learning experiences and those conscious and planned activities" (Day, 1999 p.4) which aim at improving the quality of education in the classroom. Another point worth mentioning is that CPD should be focused on the teachers' present responsibilities (Richards & Farrell, 2005) in order to be able to implement an action plan and evaluate the results.

When teachers engage in CPD, knowledge is gained in different ways. It may be *received* - also called *propositional* (Stuart et. al., 2009) - i.e. knowledge that is derived from training and reading; *practical* - derived from what teachers know and learn from doing (Eraut, 1994); and *individual*, which is the result of moving towards teacher development which includes 'personal and moral dimensions' (Mann, 2005, p. 105).

Good CPD is multifaceted and as such it is necessary to first identify the areas that need development in order to prepare training (Borg, 2015). Borg goes on to suggest that CPD can have sustained positive impact on teachers, learners and organisations if learning provides the motivation for CPD and if the teachers are involved in the content and process of it reflecting and evaluating their beliefs. He also points out the need to work in collaboration with colleagues as well as supported by schools and educational systems.

CPD plays a key role in the quality of teaching and learning in Ceibal en Inglés programme. Remote teachers (RT) are observed at least once a year by a quality manager during a Teaching Quality Review (TQR). RTs are at the center of the process and the quality of teaching and learning is the motivation for change. Observations are developmental, followed by a reflective feedback session which ends in the creation of a PD action plan to work on the areas that both the observer and the teacher agree need improvement. RTs keep their individual action plans in a digital portfolio and agree with their coordinators ways of developing each action point; for example, by doing peer observation, self-recordings, watching a webinar, etc. RTs are encouraged to research at least one area of their interest, for example: learner participation. As Borg (2015) points out, CPD is an ongoing process and teachers should be engaged in the examination and review of their beliefs. Strong areas are highlighted and RTs who exceed expectations in a particular practice, share good practice with the RT community in webinars, meetings, workshops, video recordings, events and forums. Internal support from coordinators and remote teaching centre (RTC) academic managers (RTCs) is provided. External support from the quality team, experts in different fields of technology, educational special needs, materials development, just to mention some, is provided in the form of webinars, face-to-face meetings or training sessions.

Teaching for Success

The British Council's approach to CPD called *Teaching for Success*, is a CPD framework aimed at helping teachers understand and plan their own professional development (British Council, 2015). This framework for teachers includes four stages of development 1. Awareness; 2. Understanding; 3. Engagement; 4. Integration and twelve professional practices.

The twelve professional practices are the following:

- Planning lessons and courses
- Understanding learners
- Managing the lesson
- Knowing the subject
- Managing resources
- Assessing learning
- Integrating ICT
- Taking responsibility for professional development
- Using inclusive practices
- Using multilingual approaches

- Promoting 21st-century skills
- Understanding educational policies and practice.

In the *Awareness* stage, the teacher has heard of any or all of the twelve teaching practices above that describe good teaching quality. In the second stage, referred to as *Understanding*, the teacher knows what each professional practice means and why it is important. In the *Engagement* stage of development, the teacher demonstrates competency in this professional practice at work. Finally, in the fourth and last stage called *Integration*, the teacher demonstrates a high level of competency in this professional practice and this consistently informs what they do at work.

Taking this framework as the basis of CPD for remote teachers, research was undertaken in order to determine if any of the professional practices needed to be adapted, or if there was a need to add to this with respect to remote teaching. What follows is the description of that research and analysis of the results.

Research Methodology

As the aim of this research study was to describe remote language teaching and identify the factors that teachers need to focus on in order to be successful, the research methodology adopted was an exploratory paradigm with a focus on the descriptive and interpretative. That is, the aim was to describe remote teaching and understand the shortcomings of RTs (both what they themselves felt were the shortcomings and what others, namely Quality Managers, felt). Anecdotal evidence indicated that key areas to explore included *understanding learners* and *managing the lesson at distance*, but the researchers were careful not to limit the study to those two areas. It was felt that a Mixed Methods Research (MMR) approach was required. MMR has come to be regarded in research literature as a research methodology of considerable scope and value (Doyle, Brady & Bryne, 2009), and is 'a more inclusive research methodology, drawing appropriately on a range of quantitative and qualitative methods.' (Mehdi Riazi and Candlin, 2014 p.139).

Observations of teachers

It was decided that three sources of data collection would be used to ensure validity and reliability of the results (cross-sectional data and method triangulation). The first source of data to be collected would be through teacher observation. The reasons for doing this were varied. First, all teachers on the project are routinely observed at least once a year as part of

the Quality Management system established and running on the project from 2012 and the data was already being collected and used in reports on teaching quality for Plan Ceibal and to inform the subsequent teacher training programme. Observation of teachers would therefore not be disruptive. Secondly, observation of teachers is a tried-and-tested way of collecting objective data about “teachers’ styles, their classroom management skills and various aspects of teaching that are hard to obtain through other forms of evaluation.” (Murphy, 2013).

In the period of the research study, observations of 108 teachers’ lessons were undertaken by quality managers (QMs) during the annual *Teaching Quality Review* (TQR) period. During the period of observation, QMs complete an observation form in order to have a record and provide RTs and RTCs with constructive, developmental feedback. RTs complete a pre-observation form providing details of the school context, learners, lesson plan adaptations, team working with classroom teacher and the use of the LMS. The observation form used includes a range of nine standards: lesson planning, creating a positive learning environment, managing interaction and participation, managing activities, ELT subject knowledge, understanding learners, learning technologies, resources, professional administration. Each practice includes some descriptors; for example, lesson planning involves lesson plan, order and pace and anticipating problems. Each descriptor is marked as a point of expectations achieved or an area for improvement. QMs tick boxes and may make comments about RT’s performance in each standard. See *figure 1* below:

1. Lesson planning				
Ceibal en Inglés lessons broadly follow the published lesson plans and always address the stated learning outcomes. Adaptations are made when desirable or necessary to cater for individual students or specific groups, and lessons are staged and paced in a way that supports learners to meet the learning outcomes. When something unexpected occurs, the remote teacher (RT) shows flexibility in responding to this in order to minimise disruption to lesson flow and learning.				
Teaching standards	Met	Partly Met	Not met	
1. Lesson planning	1.1 Lesson plan	<input type="checkbox"/> The lesson plan is broadly followed and the lesson targets the learning outcomes of the syllabus. Activities are adapted when necessary, ensuring that they are appropriate for the learners’ age, interests, needs and level.	<input type="checkbox"/> Necessary adaptations for the class group are lacking, or adaptations to the lesson plan have limited success, for example by not fully meeting learning outcomes or the needs and preferences of learners.	<input type="checkbox"/> The lesson plan is not followed and/or adaptations are inappropriate and do not address the learning outcomes of the lesson within the syllabus.
	1.2 Order and pace	<input type="checkbox"/> Activities are carried out in a logical order with appropriate timing and pace.	<input type="checkbox"/> There are issues with the order of activities or pace for one or two stages of the lesson.	<input type="checkbox"/> The order of activities does not support learning and/or the lesson is delivered to fast or too slowly to adequately challenge and/or support learners.
	1.3 Anticipating problems and solutions	<input type="checkbox"/> Possible problems with target language, materials and/or tasks are anticipated with consideration for the particular group of learners. Possible solutions (such as adaptations, backups, extra attention) are planned and implemented where necessary.	<input type="checkbox"/> There is an attempt to anticipate potential problems and solutions, but these may lack depth and/or a minor issue arises in class that could have been anticipated and managed but isn’t.	<input type="checkbox"/> There is insufficient anticipation of possible problems and solutions, resulting in a predictable issue arising in class that should have been considered and avoided or better managed.
Comments:				

Figure 1. Excerpt from observation instrument used in 2018.

QMs record ratings for each RT in the form to assess the strongest and weakest areas for each practice. This data is shared with the quality team and the RTs' coordinators (Directors of Study) as well as used to select topics for training, peer observation, self-observation, research and other forms for CPD.

The descriptors for each practice have been adapted from the British Council teaching standards and include specific criteria required by *Ceibal en Inglés*. The observation form has been edited every year since 2012 as experience in the field of remote teaching has been gained. As described by Negrón et al. (2019, p. x), quality management in *Ceibal en Inglés* has “grown in scope from small-scale observations of teachers undertaken during the pilot phase of the project in 2012 into a complex quality management system.” It is to date the largest teacher observation, development and evaluation system the British Council has globally, and “every remote teacher is observed and evaluated, as well as trained according to needs.” (Knagg and Searle, 2016 p. x).

The standards of quality and practices included in the 2018 observation form which were used to collect data for the research results shared here include:

1 Lesson planning involves three main practices: *lesson planning, order and pace and anticipating problems and solutions*. Expectations are met when lessons broadly follow the published lesson plans and always address the stated learning outcomes. Adaptations should be made when desirable or necessary to cater for individual students or specific groups, and lessons are staged and paced in a way that supports learners to meet the learning outcomes. When something unexpected occurs, the RT shows flexibility in responding to this in order to minimise disruption to lesson flow and learning.

2 Classroom Management: Creating a positive learning environment involves *classroom routines, cooperation with classroom teacher, seating arrangement, rapport, participation and responses to learners' contributions*. Expectations are met when classroom routines and RT-learner rapport combine to foster a positive and supportive language learning environment in which all learners are encouraged to participate and the majority do. The remote teacher and classroom teacher (CT) work together effectively to deliver the lesson, with agreed and defined roles, and the seating arrangement is conducive to communicative language teaching as far as the furniture and space allow.

3 Classroom Management: Managing interaction and participation involves *interaction patterns, remote teacher and learner talking time, remote teacher's presence*. Ceibal en Inglés lessons follow a communicative methodology and opportunities for learner practice are prioritised, maximising learner talking time. RTs use strategies to increase their virtual presence in the classroom to engage learners and motivate them to take part.

4 Classroom Management: Managing activities involves *the use of graded English, setting up tasks and feedback and error correction*. Ceibal en Inglés remote lessons are delivered in English, and the use of L1 (Spanish) should be restricted to communication with the classroom teacher. Tasks are set up effectively by following the instructions cycle (giving, checking, modelling and monitoring) and feedback is given appropriately to learners on task performance and language used.

5 ELT Subject Knowledge involves *knowledge of the language, teaching language systems and teaching language skills*. RTs research the target language of the lesson and use accurate and natural English in class. They employ current ELT methodology to effectively teach language systems (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, functions), conveying meaning, raising awareness of form and use and providing appropriate practice opportunities. Basic ELT techniques and procedures are also used for developing learner skills in English (primarily speaking and listening in the remote synchronous lesson, but also on occasion reading and writing depending on lesson content and learning outcomes. Procedures will be followed to improve learners' ability to listen, such as setting the context, predicting content, providing a task before listening, etc.

6 Understanding the learners involves *learner training, culture and context, and flexibility*. RTs take the needs and preferences of their learners into account considering the context of each school as well as the strengths and weaknesses of specific learners and groups. Possible learner problems with target language, materials and/or tasks are anticipated and solutions to these are planned and implemented. Learner training techniques are included in lessons to develop learner autonomy and positive independent learning habits. Examples of this can include encouraging reflection, developing self-study skills, signposting learning and nurturing positive learning routines and habits in class (raising hands, listening to peers).

7 Learning technologies involves *use of the classroom video conference equipment (VCE), use of teaching point VCE and nurturing the use of the LMS*. The video conference equipment used for remote teaching affords opportunities to control zooming and panning of the classroom camera, as well as to zoom in the teaching point (TP) and adjust the view on the RTs screen. Effective remote teaching exploits these tools to enhance the RT's presence and to assist with classroom management. RTs also take an active role in encouraging and motivating learners to use the functions and activities available on the LMS.

8 Resources involves *using given materials and creating RT's own materials*. RTs ensure that the materials they use are appropriate for their young learners and serve to increase motivation and aid learning. Some form of presentation (normally a series of flipchart or PowerPoint slides) accompanies each lesson, and this is both age-appropriate and clear. It is common for effective remote teachers to find additional materials including videos and songs to engage and support their particular group of learners. When delivering the lesson, the available tools and resources are incorporated expertly and efficiently to support effective learning.

9 Professional administration involves *punctuality and forms completion*. Remote lessons should start and finish on time, including allowing for rescheduling of class time in agreement with the classroom teacher. Teaching quality review observations require thorough and thoughtful completion of the following three observation documents: pre-observation, post-observation and post-feedback forms. These documents are designed to mirror and evidence professional and reflective teaching, including research and preparation of stages and materials, consideration of learners and context, reflection and action planning. All RTs upload all forms to their portfolio in the LMS.

Remote Teacher surveys

The second source of data was surveys undertaken with RTs, in order to understand their experience and explore where they felt they needed help. The intention of the survey “was to focus on the skills the participants believed RTs need to have”(Pintos, 2019, p. x). This data could then be contrasted with the observation data to see whether the skills the RTs themselves felt they needed to develop were the same as those identified by QMs through observations. A total of 60 RTs completed the survey, which had two sections. The first

section focused on the background and experience of the RTs and the second section was designed to explore what qualities the RTs believed were necessary to be a good remote teacher.

The first set of questions were selected by the RTs and focused on looking at their qualifications and experience as a teacher of young learners, asking:

- How long have you been working as a language teacher in face-to-face contexts?
- Which teaching qualifications do you hold?
- Before becoming a remote teacher, did you have experience teaching young learners?
- How long have you worked as a remote language teacher?
- How much of your workload is taken up by remote language teaching?

The next set of questions allowed the RTs to supply open-ended answers:

- Briefly, describe the reasons that led you to try remote language teaching and explain what your first experiences were like.
- What were your top 3 concerns before you started teaching remotely?
- Once you started, what did you find most challenging about remote language teaching?
- What are the top 3 skills you need to develop in order to teach remotely?

The second section of the survey asked the RTs to rate the following aspects of remote teaching on a scale of 1-3, with 1 being 'a key characteristic' and 3 being 'important but not key':-

A good remote teacher...

- ...adapts the objectives of the lesson to the characteristics of the class, culture, age, needs and interests
- ...anticipates problems of teaching remotely and thinks of solutions with the classroom teacher
- ...deals with the unexpected together with the classroom teacher
- ...personalises and shares cultural differences
- ...shows ownership of the class
- ...gets her teaching point ready before starting the class
- ...gets involved in the organisation of the brick-and-mortar classroom
- ...finds ways of communicating effectively with the classroom teacher
- ...demonstrates tasks and checks understanding

- ...trains the students to use the LMS (learning management system) *Crea* so they become independent learners
- ...promotes collaborative work in the LMS *Crea*
- ...has online and offline resources ready before starting the lesson
- ...is camera-aware
- ...uses the remote control to have a good view of the students without intimidating them
- ...uses gestures, smiles, stands-up (i.e. does not sit all the time)
- ...uses props, toys, posters, puppets, etc.
- ...uses music, games, acting, etc. to engage students
- ...keeps the students active during the lesson
- ...includes a variety of tasks and routines to provide a dynamic and safe environment
- ...agrees with the classroom teacher on how to organise pair and group work
- ...uses the students' laptops in the remote language lesson
- ...likes trying something new with the class
- ...enjoys the lesson along with the students
- ...uses only English to deliver the lesson
- ...uses a variety of visuals to convey meaning
- ...makes use of a whiteboard to share new vocabulary and meaning, etc.
- ...tries out new ways of transcending the screen.

Although these questions did not directly correspond to the teaching standards, they were designed to link to what had been previously expressed by RTs as areas for potential CPD.

Interviews with remote teachers

To supplement the survey data, in-depth interviews were carried out with 20 RTs in order to enrich understanding and to allow the voices of the RTs themselves to be better heard and taken into consideration. . The interviews were arranged and conducted by a research manager, . A cross-section of RTs from seven remote teaching centres based in Uruguay, the Philippines and Argentina were interviewed, chosen because they were the largest centres on the project. Care was taken when selecting participants to ensure a variety of RTs were chosen, including in particular that those with little experience (less than a year) and those with the most (more than two years) were interviewed (see Figure 2. below).

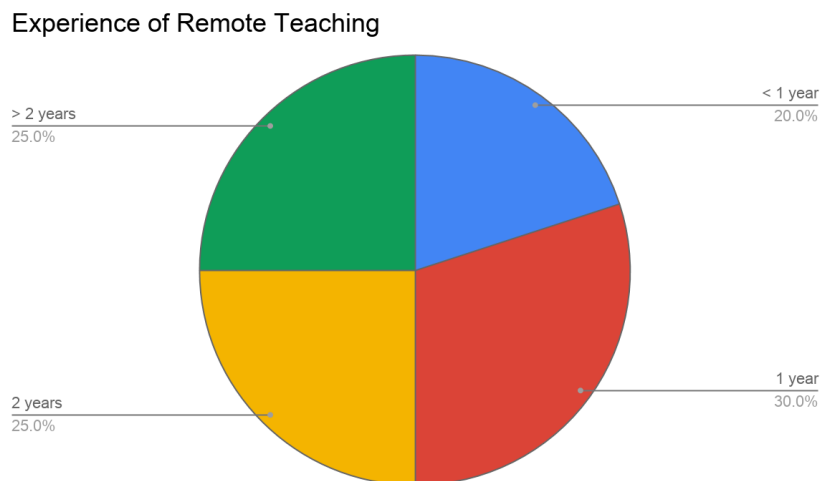


Figure 2. Experience of remote teachers

The interviews were semi-structured and used a combination of pre-prepared guiding questions and prompts (based on the survey questions), but an opportunity was also given to those interviewed to elaborate in an exploratory manner (Dornyei, 2007), which enabled the researchers to understand individual experiences in more detail than otherwise would have been possible.

Results

An analysis of the data collected through teacher observation was carried out separately to the analysis of the survey and interview data. In this section we will look at the results of each of these, and this will be followed by a discussion to compare and contrast the data and draw conclusions.

Observation data analysis

In the observation data collected during the teaching quality review, the following points of evidence were identified from observations of 108 RTs. As mentioned previously, QMs recorded RTs ratings with the number and percentages of expectations met and areas for improvement. This data was shared with other QMs and remote teaching providers, and used to improve the quality of teaching and learning on the project. The percentages below reflect the number of RTs that complied with the standards during the observations carried out by different QMs.

The main **areas of excellence** were identified as:

- **Understanding learners: Culture and context:** 100% of RTs have considered the context of the school as shared prior to the observation in a detailed description of the group of learners, socio economic context, special educational needs, resources, etc. shared in the pre-observation form. The information provided was considered to make adaptations to the lesson plan provided by Plan Ceibal and such adaptations were seen and worked effectively during the observation of the remote lesson.
- **Resources. Preparing own materials.** 100% of RTs prepared a clear presentation with age-appropriate images, large fonts and clearly laid-out text. Engaging and appropriate additional audio/visual and other materials were used to support learning and participation. Culture and school context were considered to personalise the presentation.
- **Creating a positive environment: Coordination with classroom teacher** 98.63% of the RTs observed showed evidence of coordination with the classroom teacher. Evidence of weekly communication via videoconferencing, *WhatsApp* and email was clearly seen as RT and CT managed the classroom together and learners understood the different roles they both perform. Good coordination of learning objectives was also observed in the learners' performance during the synchronous lesson, which means learners were ready to move on to the next learning objective.
- **ELT Subject knowledge: Knowledge of language.** 98.63% of RTs observed demonstrated knowledge and research of the target language. Accurate oral and written models were provided throughout the lesson.
- **Understanding Learners. Flexibility.** 97.26% of RT showed flexibility in delivering the lesson and appropriate changes were made when something unexpected occurred in order to minimise disruption and keep the lesson flow.
- **RT's professionalism** 97.26% The pre-observation, post-observation and post-feedback forms were completed thoroughly, including necessary evidence, and submitted to deadlines.

The main **areas for improvement** were identified as:

- **Managing interaction** in particular, reducing Teacher Talking Time (TTT) and varying interaction patterns should be worked on. Different interaction patterns were incorporated but not always fully successfully. Interaction mostly dominated by the RT (T-Ss). 70% of RTs observed performed according to the expectations as described in the observation form.

- **Participation and managing activities**, especially setting up tasks, providing feedback and correcting errors. 70% of RTs observed set the task effectively with clear instructions. 30% found the following practices challenging. Task set-up was sometimes ineffective resulting in confusion and missed opportunities for practice and learning. Giving instructions, modelling and/or checking of understanding were unsuccessful. Feedback was given inconsistently and/or is sometimes ineffectively. Praising was overused.

Survey data results

Discussion of the results of the data analysis was previously reported by Pintos (2019) and this identified the skills that were specific to remote teaching, or which were approached differently because the teacher was not physically present in the classroom. What follows is more detail of the most interesting / relevant results that were obtained from the survey data.

Q: What were your top 3 concerns before you started teaching remotely?

Hardly unsurprisingly, as can be seen in *Figure 3* (below), the RTs reported technology as being their main concern before they started (21.5% or 32 RTs). Concerns about having adequate materials to teach from (18.8% or 208 RTs) were most likely because bespoke lesson plans were used rather than commercially available course books. Issues relating to team teaching with the CT (13.4% or 20 RTs) were clearly because this mode of teaching was unfamiliar to the teachers, and because of the cultural differences between the Classroom Teachers (CTs) in Uruguay and those in other countries. Next mentioned were classroom management at a distance and being able to motivate students, which is also not surprising - not being able to physically monitor students when teaching online is always an issue.

Top 3 Concerns Before Remote Teaching

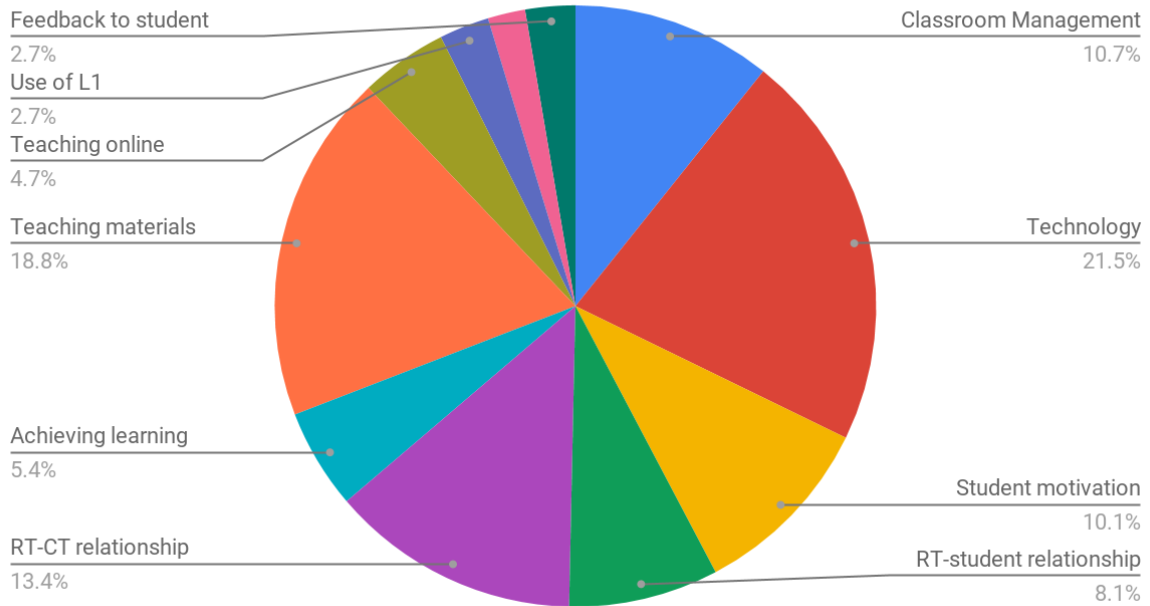


Figure 3. Top 3 concerns before remote teachers

Q: Once you started, what did you find most challenging about remote language teaching?

Figure 4 (below) suggests that “engaging students” (see *Remote Teaching Challenges* pie chart below) was the number one challenge that RTs face when teaching in this way. 36.6% (15 RTs) mentioned this as a challenge. This suggests that the physical distance between RT and students was more of an issue than RTs originally believed (being able to motivate students in *Figure 2* above) Answers to this question usually mentioned “not being physically present in the classroom” as being the main reason why this was a challenge. Some RTs said this was made more difficult because the RT taught only once a week, with the Classroom Teacher (CT) taking the two follow-on lessons.

Remote Teaching Challenges

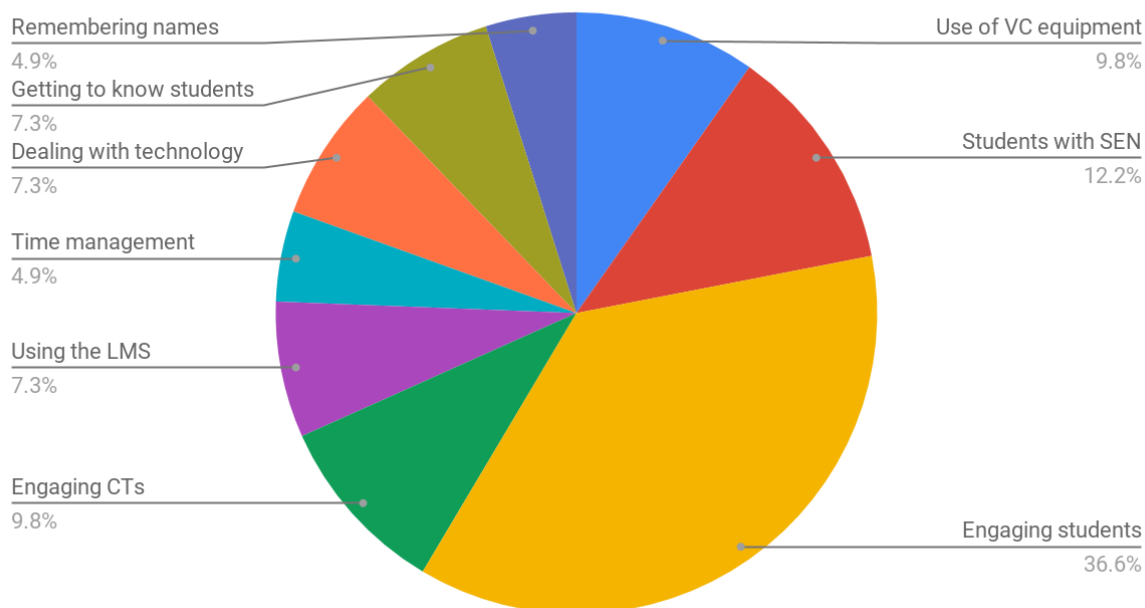


Figure 4. Remote Teaching challenges

Q: What are the differences between face-to-face teaching and remote teaching?

When asked about the differences between face-to-face and remote teaching (see Figure 5. below), RTs mentioned team teaching and organising pairwork the most. The first of these is not unsurprising and reflects answers given to other questions above, recognising the peculiarity and potential difficulties that having to team teach online with another teacher implies. The second of these differences also reflects the challenge of organising pair and groupwork when the RT is not physically in the same space as the students. Usual activities for language teachers, such as monitoring students become difficult or impossible when the only sound that can be heard is from a microphone placed among students. Materials design was also mentioned and this can be said to be linked to the first two, as team teaching in this context requires Spanish translation of lesson plans (because CTs do not necessarily understand English), which makes it harder for teachers to make changes to lesson plans, as they have to communicate these changes before the lesson to the CTs.

Differences with F2F Teaching

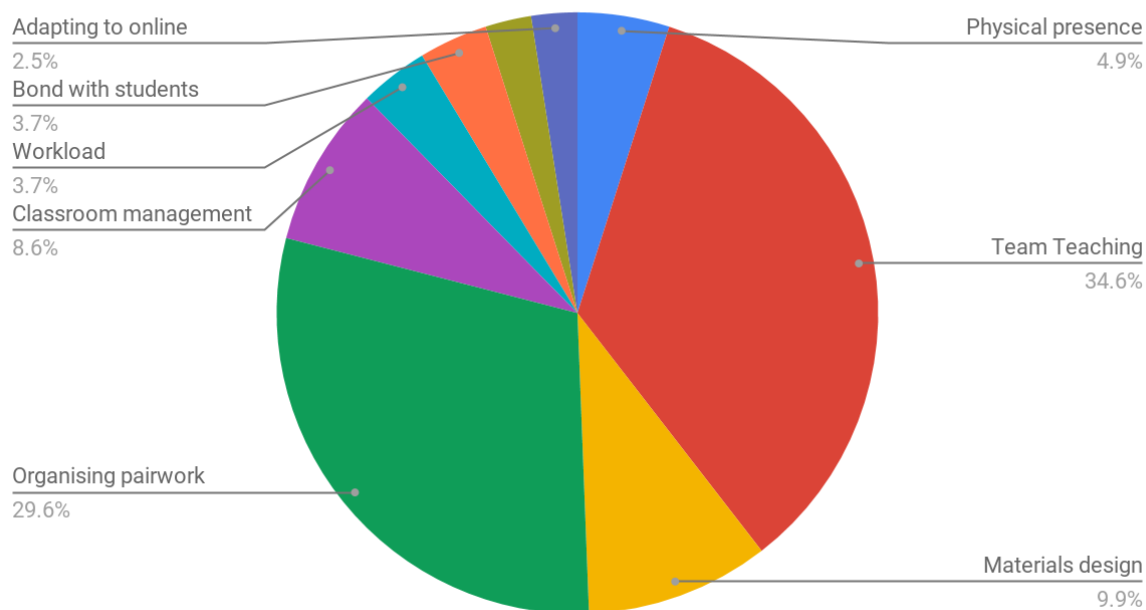


Figure 5. Differences with Face-to-face teaching

Q: What are the top 3 skills you need to develop in order to teach remotely?

Answers RTs gave to this question (see Figure 6. below) were dominated by the use of technology, followed by references to team teaching and coordination with the classroom teacher. This is related to what has been mentioned previously. The RT needs to become adept at managing a number of different technologies during the lesson, including remote controls for the television and videoconferencing equipment (zooming in and out when need be, not only to focus on the RT, but taking control of the remote camera to focus on particular students, for example). Team teaching and coordination are related. For successful team teaching to occur, the RT needs to coordinate at a distance on a weekly basis with the CT. The RTs need to rely on their relationship with CTs in order to know more about the learners, understand when students are not making sufficient progress, if there are any special educational needs or other contextual information they need to be aware of, etc.

Top skills for Remote Teaching

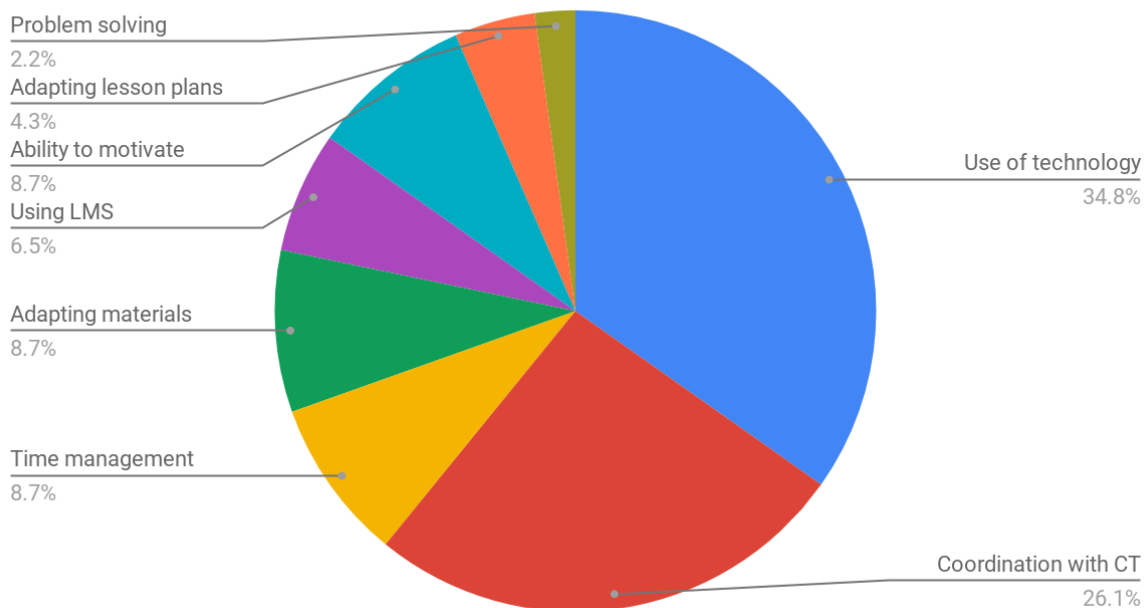


Figure 6. Top Skills for Remote Teaching

To summarise, the results of the survey indicated that any CPD programme for RTs should focus on the key factors of supporting the use of videoconferencing technology, helping RTs to manage the classroom (including motivating learners and providing strategies for pair and group-work) and providing strategies to help the teachers work with CTs, and supporting them with practical ideas for improving team teaching techniques.

Interview data results

During the interviews, the following skills were reported as being important to have or to develop as a RT:

- **Classroom management at a distance**

17 RTs (85%) interviewed mentioned that classroom management at a distance was an important skill to develop, with one RT (1 year experience, Argentina) stating it is necessary because, when teaching remotely “*you cannot physically approach a student who is misbehaving*”. RTs mentioned the following as being important factors for being able to manage the classroom when teaching remotely: establish positive rapport with the students and CT; use names to address everyone in the local classroom; be responsive to energy and pace during the lesson; respond to the students’ and the CT’s contributions to keep them engaged and participating.

- **Team teaching and coordination**

16 RTs (80%) stressed the importance of having regular, weekly meetings with the CT (called *coordination* in *Ceibal en Inglés*) and being in touch via a number of different channels (WhatsApp, email, etc.) to exchange information about the class or the progress of individual students. One RT mentioned “there is very little room for classroom management and delivery of...[the videoconferencing lesson]...without coordination” (1 year experience, Uruguay) 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.” (<2 years experience, Argentina).

- **Learning technology**

As mentioned in the discussion of survey results, RTs need to become familiar with learning technologies, in particular the specific functions of the videoconferencing technology. Because of this, when recruiting teachers, remote teaching centres usually ask as essential criteria some experience of teaching online. Not surprisingly then, almost all RTs mentioned they had some experience using learning technology before teaching remotely.

- **Troubleshooting and technical support**

The ability to act quickly if and when technology fails was mentioned as being important. It was mentioned that RTs need to be calm and to be flexible and accept that technology sometimes fails. Knowing who to contact and having a plan B were also mentioned by RTs.

- **Working on the LMS**

The LMS allows teachers to read and correct student work, share lesson plans with the CT, share teaching and learning materials and provide students with extra self-study materials. The importance of a RT becoming comfortable with using the LMS then cannot be understated. As one RT (2 years experience, Argentina) mentioned RTs need to be “technologically savvy enough so as to make the most of the opportunities that asynchronous communication offers”, which includes “responding on a timely basis when questions or work is posted.”

- **Use of the camera**

In *Ceibal en Inglés*, the technology used is the high-end videoconferencing technology more commonly seen in the business world, rather than software video conferencing solutions such as *Skype* or *Zoom* (2019). This equipment allows the RT to take control of the camera in the classroom as well as the one pointing at the RT. These are high definition cameras with the ability to pan and zoom, which are powerful tools if you

want to focus on a group of students, or even one student in particular. Not surprisingly, then being able to make better use of the camera was mentioned in the interviews by most RTs as being an important skill to develop. Knowing how best to use this enables RTs to monitor students during pair and group work. This can be done more effectively if the CT moves the microphone to the group the RT wants to monitor, which is to be encouraged. One RT reported moving 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.”

The zoom function is particularly useful when the focus is on pronunciation. One RT said “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**

Telepresence, or as defined by one of the academic managers interviewed “having good presence on a screen” (>2 years experience, Uruguay) was mentioned as being important to develop by many RTs during the interviews and surveys. It was reported by another academic manager that RTs “need to develop the ability to virtually come out of the screen and into the classroom...the children need to forget that the teacher is often hundreds of kilometres away and not actually physically present in the classroom.” (2 years experience, Philippines) How do RTs do this? Some mentioned the importance of looking directly into the camera rather than at the screen, which gives the impression of looking directly at the students. Another RT (1 year experience, Uruguay) said that, as with a standard young learner class, developing rapport with the students (e.g. knowing their names and using them) and a well-structured lesson with routines means “your students...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.”

- **Use of body language**

RTs stressed the importance of not being a talking head on the screen and making use of exaggerated body language and gestures when teaching primary school age children. This and dancing, mimicking and pointing to objects are useful to keep the attention of the students. One RT (1 year experience, Philippines) said, “Showing is more important than telling and there has to be a 100 percent correspondence between what you say and what you show with your body.”

- **Voice control**

Teaching remotely means having to find/develop strategies for getting the attention that do not rely on using your physical presence in the classroom. For this reason, how the RT uses their voice is important. One of the RTs interviewed (2 years experience,

Argentina) reported “When they are not listening, I sometimes start whispering and they start saying ‘we cannot hear’ and ask if I turned off the microphone.” Most RTs mentioned the need to speak more quietly than they were used to doing in the classroom because the microphone is very sensitive.

Discussion

The data collected through observations, surveys and interviews show some unexpected results as well as confirming other opinions. Concentrating on the main differences and similarities in the results and what this means for CPD, the following areas are worthy of discussion.

Team teaching / coordination

Chatfield (2019 p. 24) highlights ‘the strong focus on coordination between the remote teacher and classroom teacher, and on the development of that relationship.’ Observation data collected in previous years indicated this was an area for RTs to work on and resulted in training being offered to RTs. This observation data showed that RTs were strong on coordination with the classroom teacher, with 98.63%. This was reported in the survey of being of particular concern to RTs before they started teaching and is also a focus of RT induction and CPD. It could be claimed that a combination of the awareness of potential difficulties and training has helped ensure this particular area is not of concern. Different dynamics of team teaching have been observed. Some CTs co-teach with their RT, and others (the majority) support the work of the RT by organising the students, monitoring pair work to ensure they are on task, and guiding learners to do the weekly homework . Coordination now typically occurs via WhatsApp at times convenient for both teachers.

Classroom management at a distance

Managing a classroom at a distance is challenging and usually, as Stanley (2019) mentions because teamwork is key to this ‘the RT must work closely with the CT to ensure student behaviour does not interrupt learning and that both teachers know what is going to happen during the lesson’ (p.10) If we compare the data collected in 2018 with 2017, classroom management of remote teaching has always been a challenge. From 187 RTs observed in 2017, 63% managed interaction and activities according to the expectations. Improvements have been made since then, evident from the results of the observation data collected and reported above and this shows that training has helped. One strategy adopted by RTs, for instance, is creating a map of the class with an agreed seating arrangement and learners’ names. The CT is also asked to respect the agreed seating arrangement so the RT can appoint learners by their names during the remote lesson. When several students are absent, a RT can create a new map of the class on the spot. The implementation of the start of the lesson routines like greetings, talking about the weather, making comments on students’ posts on the LMS as well as the end of the lesson routines help the RT to manage the classroom at distance as learners know what to expect and feel safe.

Motivating students

One major concern of RTs before they started remote teaching, and also once they started, was motivation of students. 36.6% mentioned that 'engaging students' was a challenge, although this dropped to 9.8% once RTs started teaching, and has not been detected as being particularly problematic through the observation data. It was, therefore, decided that it is not an area that needs particular focus for RT CPD. As Rovegno (2019 p.45) mentions, 'The role of the CT in keeping motivation high is also important' and this is linked to coordination and team teaching, and so motivation will be an offshoot of cpd in this area. However, it is felt that as remote teaching is no longer a novelty for students, this means RTs need to make the lesson more learner-centred than they used to keep learners motivated and on task.

Managing interaction

In the observations, this was identified as an area needing improvement, especially when it came to reducing Teacher Talking Time and carrying interaction patterns, with the RT dominating. RTs have received guidance on how to reduce the amount of L1 used, replacing this with more visual support, use of examples, gestures. Induction and online training courses created for the programme have helped improve this. Monitoring pair and group work with the remote control is a challenge as RTs can zoom in on students, but they cannot hear what pairs or groups are saying or checking what they are writing on paper. RTs sometimes establish pair work for activities that lend themselves to individual work like completing a gap. When checking activities, RTs appoint individual students rather than pairs or a member of each group. Action research could be a way of improving this practice.

Participation and managing activities

As mentioned previously, error correction, setting up tasks and providing feedback were identified during observations as being areas RTs needed help with. These areas were not mentioned by RTs as being of particular concern, which indicates a need for awareness training and introduction to the CPD programme.

Other interesting conclusions can be drawn through the comparison of what RTs report as being of concern before beginning teaching and what they identify as being challenging after they have started. For instance, before starting 21% RTs worry about the use of technology, but this drops to 7.3% of RTs after they have started to teach. This worry is normal considering the most obvious difference between remote teaching and teaching face-to-face in a classroom is in the use of technology. What accounts for the difference in results? It could be claimed that as teachers receive training and support in using the videoconferencing (and other) technology, this significantly contributes to the difference. The data from the surveys and interviews revealed that RTs themselves seemed preoccupied with other aspects of remote teaching that had not been identified from the observations. These areas are classroom management at a distance, motivating students, and team teaching/coordination. This highlights the importance of undertaking the survey and interviews before launching a programme of CPD with teachers. For CPD to be effective (Borg, 2015 p.3) it is important that teachers themselves believe they are being consulted and their needs addressed.

Conclusion

This investigation into remote teaching and what it means for teacher CPD has helped identify aspects of teaching that RTs have most difficulty with and that they need most help with. It also served to reinforce with evidence some of the beliefs about remote teaching that were held by Quality and Academic Managers on the projects. Analysis of data collected through observations, surveys and interviews enabled a broader understanding of what was required and desired than would otherwise have been obtained. Subsequent discussion of how to approach CPD with the teachers once the findings had been analysed meant that the approach adopted incorporated a range of methods of CPD (peer correction, for instance) that were felt to be effective ways of helping the teachers given their needs.

From the data collected, it was also the British Council's Teaching for Success CPD framework (British Council, 2015) that needed to be adapted for the following practices to be more relevant to remote teaching on the project: Use of technology, Planning lesson plans and courses (planning the grouping of learners remotely), Understanding learners (setting and monitoring group dynamics remotely and developing learners' level of autonomy), Managing the lesson (making effective use of the VCE to monitor learner engagement remotely) and Assessment (effectiveness of assessment of learners' progress at distance).

Subsequent to the observations, surveys and interviews, decisions to implement action research and a peer observation scheme were taken. This will add to the existing face-to-face induction, webinars and online training in an attempt to bring about improvement in the above mentioned areas. In order to identify new areas for research and professional development, QMs were asked to observe 30% of the lessons directly from schools in Uruguay in 2019, rather than while sitting with the RT (the usual method).

It should also be said that in no way is this felt to be the be-all-and-end all of how to help RTs with CPD. It is understood that over time, the needs and requirements of the RTs will change, and so further research and investigation will be needed to ensure that appropriate responses to teacher requirements are discussed, and changes made when appropriate. In order to track changing needs, regular observations will continue, and it is anticipated that further surveys and interviews, similar to those described here, will be required.

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