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Factors That Contribute To Success In the Remote English Classroom

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FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO SUCCESS IN THE REMOTE ENGLISH

CLASSROOM

by

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

I decided while still in high school that I wanted to be an English as a second language teacher. I do not remember the exact reasoning behind that decision, but I was intrigued by the world outside of my hometown. I thought that being an ESL teacher would open the doors to travel and to learn about the world. While I was an undergraduate student at Hamline University, studying to be a teacher, I maintained my goal of becoming an ESL teacher, but was more aware of the number of people learning English in my own backyard and the need for teachers at home. I prepared for a career in the public school system in the United States, working with immigrant and refugee students. This is the system in which I was trained as a teacher. It was not my original dream, but I was just as excited about it. However, for personal reasons, I ended up going back to the original plan. I moved abroad and was thrown into a teaching situation that I felt completely unprepared for—a situation completely different from that training that I had had.

New to the country, needing some source of income, first I accepted a job in a private school teaching English to preschool students. It was a great experience, but it was not for me. Then I got a job in a private English institute teaching mostly Business English to adults, both in person and online, both one-on-one and in groups. I also spent some time teaching online for a local technical university. However, what has been the biggest challenge for me was working with a national program which provides English classes to fourth through sixth grades of elementary school in all parts of the country through videoconference.

My first day teaching a group of children through a camera was terrifying. I left the class frustrated and convinced that it was impossible to teach through this method. Imagine yourself, a teacher, sitting in front of a camera, armed only with some fancy technology and a lot of theory and methodology that you learned in the university. Then imagine, on the other side of the camera, between 20 and 30 upper elementary school students from the countryside who do not understand the relevance of learning English.

My first year in this program was one of many ups and downs. There were days that I was ready to quit, and there were days that left me intrigued, wanting more. That is common to all teachers, I think. I still do not know if I think that videoconferencing is a good idea for teaching a foreign language in elementary schools. I do know that I want to try again a second year to see if, now having a lot more knowledge, I can do better, if the program can do better.

At the end of the year, I had a significant moment. After so many lessons, I had to give an oral evaluation to the students. One by one, they approached the microphone. I asked a series of questions that we had previously rehearsed. On the same day I did this with two different classes. They were both fifth grade, in the same school. In one of the classes, over half of the students were able to answer my questions in complete sentences. In the other class, only one or two could. In the first class, almost all were able to understand the questions and respond. In the second class, more than half the class just gave me blank stares.

That day left me wondering what the difference was between those two classes. Why did one class do so much better than the other? What are the factors that make the difference? How do I define success in my classes and what determines this success?

This left me thinking about different factors, such as school size, class size, the involvement of the classroom teacher, the normal participation of students, the distance of the school from a major city, and the socioeconomic status of the school.

The primary research questions I aim to answer are: *How do remote teachers define success in their classes? 2) Which factors do remote teachers believe contribute to success in their classes?* To do this, I created a survey for remote English teachers within the program. These remote teachers were asked to define success in their classes and rate factors that do, or do not, contribute to that success. Demographic information of remote teachers was also collected. This survey was followed up by interviews with selected remote teachers in order to allow them to expand on their answers and experiences. I expected that smaller classes would have more "success." I also expected that the more involved the classroom teacher is in the class, the more students participate, and the better their results in the end.

My objective, first of all, through this project, is to be able to improve my own classes. I hope that through understanding under which circumstances students are more likely to succeed, I can emulate those circumstances in all of my classes. On a larger scale, this project could serve the program as a whole. I hope to show that the program is a viable option, that it can be successful, but that it works better in some situations that in others. Given that information, the leaders of the program can work to create the same opportunities in all classes and schools. The program teaches about 100,000 children in fourth, fifth, and sixth grade. If success could be maintained in all classes, or most classes, a significant impact in education could be made countrywide. Looking beyond

the organization, it can serve as a base for other programs across the world looking into teaching in elementary schools through videoconference.

I believe that this program is innovative and could be a great tool for education of many subjects around the world. As the world becomes more digital, it is no longer necessary for teachers to physically be in the same place as students. Why not take advantage of experts that are located around the world? However, I want to know if it is a viable option for language learning in elementary schools.

In Chapter Two, I outline the existing literature in second language acquisition, especially regarding children, the education system in the context of this study, and existing videoconference programs in teaching foreign languages in elementary schools. I explore the gaps in the research regarding this model of teaching in elementary schools and identify, based on the existing literature, the advantages and challenges of such models. Chapter Three describes the research process, the participants of the study, and the context in which it took place. Chapter Four presents the results of the study. Chapter Five summarizes the study as well as its limitations and implications.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

This study takes place in a small country in South America which is home to one of the largest one-to-one education programs in the world. This innovative program, which provides a laptop to all public school students in the country, also provides English classes to schools nationwide by videoconference. Remote teaching is becoming a more popular choice at all levels for a variety of reasons, leading to questions regarding the success of such programs particularly in teaching languages at such a young age. This study aims to address the following questions: *How do remote teachers define success in their classes? 2) Which factors do remote teachers believe contribute to success in their classes?*

This literature review first looks at the public school system in the country under consideration and this program. This leads into an exploration of other models of remote language teaching in elementary schools, the challenges, and the successes with the ultimate goal of demonstrating how to make such a program successful on a large scale.

Public Elementary Schools

The public education system in this context is divided into four parts: pre-primary, primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary (Santiago et al., 2016). This paper in particular focuses on the primary level, more specifically fourth through sixth grades, or students about eight to 13 years old, who receive English classes. The education system is headed by the autonomous National Public Education Administration (Administración Nacional de Educación Pública, ANEP), which regulates all school

education and teacher education. Mainstream public schools fall into one of the following types (Santiago et al., 2016):

- Common: Common schools operate for four hours a day either in the morning or afternoon and in 2013 accounted for 27.8% of primary students.

- Full-time: These schools operate for 7.5 hours a day and in 2013 covered 10.1% of students.

- Extended-time- like common schools, these operate for 4 hours a day; however, they offer extracurricular classes additionally and accounted for 1.1% of students in 2013

- A.PR.EN.D.E.R (Atención Prioritaria en Entornos con Dificultades Estructurales Relativas- Priority Attention in Environments of Relative Structural Difficulty): These schools have the same schedule as common schools, but are located in areas of critical context and offer additional support to those students. These schools accounted for 23.8% of student enrollment in 2013.

- Práctica (Practice): these schools also are similar to common schools but receive practice teachers. They accounted for 12.7% of enrollment in 2013.

- Rural: These schools are located in rural parts of the country and operate for five hours a day. While this type represents more than 50% of the public primary schools in the country, they had only 4.7% of the students enrolled in the public school system.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) lists the following as trends and concerns of education in this context, as pertain to primary schools (Santiago et al., 2016). First of all, it is concluded that while there is good basic

knowledge, the level of grade repetition is higher than that of other OECD countries, though this number has been decreasing since 2002. The next conclusion of the OECD is that students from the country under consideration perform better than the regional average in reading, mathematics, and science. Finally, it was also concluded that the socioeconomic status of both the students and the schools has a large impact on student performance.

Even more drastic is the difference in performance between students in public and private schools, or in rural areas as opposed to cities (Santiago et al., 2016). According to the report on the status of education in the country under consideration by the National Institute of the Evaluation of Education (INEED, 2019), students find themselves segregated into schools based on the socioeconomic status and culture of their families. In 2010, 40% of public school students came from the poorest quintile of society. From that poorest quintile, only 3% of students attend university (TEDx Talks, 2010). An initiative, discussed later in this paper, is working to lessen the gaps formed by the differences in socioeconomic status through use of technology and remote education.

According to INEED (2019), which is published every two years, more than 20% of teachers exhibit chronic absenteeism, defined as 18 or more days absent from school per year. The institute noted the trend that the teachers who were absent more days of the year tended to be younger teachers with less experience as opposed to older teachers with more experience. Also, these high levels of absenteeism were more common in the capital than in the rural parts of the country. However, there was no noted difference in this between different socioeconomic levels of schools. Likewise, the institute found that student absences were also quite common, though less so than in 2006.

Given this overview of the public education system, this paper now looks at a national program that aims to solve some of these problems mentioned through the use of technology.

Program Context

The program being studied was founded in 2007 to create equal educational opportunities through technology (Capurro & Rodríguez Fleitas, 2017). The name of the program translates to Educational Connectivity of Basic Informatics for Online Learning (Capurro & Rodríguez Fleitas, 2017). Former president Tabaré Vásquez (as cited in Prentice, 2015), who signed the program into existence, said upon its creation, "It is the duty not only of the government, but of [the country of the study's] society as a whole, to create the conditions for all children in our country, above all the poorest, to have the same opportunities as children who have financial support. In [the country of the study] ...not only is it important to be equal before the law, but also to be equal in life." (p. 25).

The program is large, including robotics programs, programming classes, and more. One branch of the program provides a laptop and internet connection to all students enrolled in the public education system. They are able to achieve this with the help of the One Laptop Per Child (One Laptop Per Child [OLPC], n.d.) organization. One Laptop Per Child (OLPC, n.d.) aims to "empower the world's poorest children through education," thus closing the digital divide. In 2007, less than 10% of students attending school in the lowest quintile had access to a PC. In 2016, that number had risen to more than 90% of those students (Ceibal, n.d).

Another branch of the program uses these laptops in a program offering a remote English education to schools around the country. This branch was started in 2012 and

involves a combination of remote teaching, team teaching, and blended learning (Kalan & Brovetto, 2018). The program provides English classes remotely to approximately 100,000 students in 750 schools in fourth through sixth grades.

Students "meet" once a week with a remote English teacher for a 45-minute English lesson A during which the classroom teacher is also present (Banegas, 2013), then have two English lessons with their on-site classroom teacher, who does not necessarily speak English. The follow-up classes with the classroom teacher, lessons B and C, are used to reinforce lesson A. The students use the laptops provided to them to do projects and complete assignments.

The country under consideration recognizes the importance of English, though it does not include the language in the country's core curriculum (Banegas, 2013). There is a lack of English teachers throughout the country which, in general, is very rural. Using remote teachers, who are located both in the country and abroad, is an attempt to provide English education country-wide despite this lack of qualified teachers in the countryside.

While the country under consideration has developed a strong technological base, there is a lack of research regarding the success of that program from the eyes of the remote teacher. In a program based on team teaching between the remote teacher and the classroom teacher, it is surprising this lack of perspective from the remote teacher. The remote teacher is the expert in foreign language teaching. Therefore, we must look to them to evaluate the effectiveness of the program in terms of the linguistic objectives. It is also important to compare this model to others teaching foreign languages in elementary schools by videoconference in order to identify strengths and weaknesses of the remote teaching model to be able to evaluate the effectiveness and success of such a

model. Now this paper explores other models of remote teaching in the elementary school language classroom to provide this point of comparison.

Remote Language Learning Programs

While research in the use of remote learning in language classrooms in elementary schools is scarce, there are other programs which can be used to gather ideas.

England, Spain, and France

Macrory et al. (2012) looks at how technology, specifically videoconferencing technology, can be used in a language learning program in classrooms in primary schools, in this case in England, Spain, and France. The initiative was a collaboration between six primary schools, two from each of the three participating countries, local governments, and three teacher-training institutions. The aims of the program included establishing technology, motivating children, and learning the implications for teacher education.

While the context of this study includes only exchange between the remote English teachers and the local students, this European program included exchange between the students of the schools of each of the three countries (Macrory et al., 2012). As such, a triangular link was created between three schools in three different countries. The schools shared materials both through a learning management system and through videoconferencing sessions. When possible, individual students formed connections through pen pals.

Southwestern USA

Another program, one which seems to be the most similar to the context program, is one that was created in the Southwestern United States in order to be able to continue

teaching foreign languages in elementary schools despite the lack of funding and teachers trained in teaching in both English and Spanish (Thompson & Nutta, 2015). The program was aimed especially at native or heritage Spanish language speakers in schools. The study follows one fifth grade class through a year of participating in a technology-enhanced Spanish program.

The class had a daily Spanish class, some of which with an on-site Spanish teacher (Thompson & Nutta, 2015). The on-site Spanish teacher was shared among all the classes at the school. Because of this, the Spanish teacher was not able to be present in the lessons of every class every day. Rather, four days a week, Spanish classes were facilitated by the classroom teacher, who did not speak Spanish. Instead, he led the classes by showing instructional videos. The one day of the week that was led by the Spanish teacher was sometimes co-taught by a remote Spanish teacher by videoconference.

Thompson and Nutta (2015) studied the language behavior in each of the three contexts: the lessons led by the on-site Spanish teacher, the lessons led by the remote Spanish teacher, and the lessons led by the classroom teacher. By tracking the utterances of all participants, both teachers and students, it was found that English, the first language (L1), was kept to a minimum both on the parts of the students and the teachers. Over 88% of the student-to-teacher utterances were in the second language (L2), and over 77% of those from teachers to students. However, most of this was repeated speech, not free or creative utterances. In trying to maintain use of the L2, the language produced in the class was highly controlled. Despite this, the program saw great success in getting students excited about learning a language and connecting them to the culture.

Given these two examples of how remote teaching and technology are used in the language classroom in elementary schools, it is important to understand what exactly remote teaching is and what it entails so that strengths and weaknesses of the models can be identified in order to assess the success of the context program.

Remote Education

The idea of learning remotely, even learning language remotely, is not a new one. However, rapidly changing technology makes it necessary for teaching to be constantly adapting. Regardless, in any setting, whether in a classroom, online, or anywhere else, some argue that teaching and learning foreign languages is different from teaching and learning other subjects such as math or history.

Borg (2006) makes this argument claiming that teaching a foreign language is different on the following basis. First of all, he claims that the content itself, the language, is different from that of other classes in that in order to be presented effectively, it must be presented in a medium that is not yet understood by the students. The nature of the content is more dynamic than that of other subjects. Additionally, the learning of the content requires more than just a textbook; rather, a language learner needs to have authentic experience in the target language. That being said, in his study, the following characteristics were desired of a language teacher by the students: knowledge and command of the subject, the ability to explain, and fairness and availability to students.

Another frequently discussed topic is the common assumption that a good face-to-face teacher can make the transition to teaching online easily and smoothly; however, numerous studies cite skills needed to successfully teach online. Therefore, a teacher

possessing the characteristics mentioned above, knowledge and command of the subject,
the ability to explain, and fairness, could theoretically be an excellent remote teacher with
no further training. However, moving teaching to an online, remote format necessarily
changes the nature of teaching, even more so for language teachers, who depend on
contextual clues and non-verbal language to facilitate the learning of the language
(Compton, 2009).

That being said, teaching online is not something that language teachers can
avoid. In 2006, 60% of postings on an ESL job site listed technology skills as required for
the job (Compton, 2009). Technology changes the teaching dynamic; therefore, teachers
must be prepared for that change.

Most studies regarding remote teaching identify skills and characteristics that are
needed in a successful remote teacher. Teaching in general requires three types of
knowledge: content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, and contextual
knowledge (Rovegno, 2018b). The necessary skills of remote teachers encompass all of
these types of knowledge. These skills include, but are not limited to, use of camera,
telepresence, voice control, body language, and development of new styles of teaching
(Pintos, 2018; Shelley et al., 2006). Hampel and Stickler (as cited in Compton, 2009)
outline a structure of the knowledge needed by teachers to be able to teach online. They
list these skills in the form of a pyramid. From bottom to top, the skills are as follows:
technology skills, the knowledge of the specific software, the knowledge of the
constraints of that software; the ability to foster community; creativity and choice, and
the ability to develop a personal teaching style. This pyramid enforces the idea that a

remote teacher is not only a teacher, but actually wears many hats including administrator, trouble shooter, and others (Stickler & Hauck, 2006).

If teaching remotely makes it that much more difficult, why move online? The most commonly cited reason for moving online or considering that option is as a way to provide education to students in rural areas, who may not otherwise have access to the same quality of education (Capurro & Rodriguez Fleitas, 2017; Collins et al., 1996). Thompson and Nutta (2015), in their study of a remote Spanish program, noted the option as a possibility in situations in which there are not enough qualified teachers. This can also be seen in the case of English education in the country under consideration, as seen in the PISA report showing the lack of teachers to the rural parts of the country (Santiago et al., 2016).

Thompson and Nutta (2015) cite as additional benefits to moving online the possibility for cultural exchange. This exchange can come both from teacher exchange and from student exchange. Teachers in the country under consideration appreciated the democratization of knowledge to all students in the country as well as the exposure of the students to technology at a young age (Rovegno, 2018b).

These studies laid the foundations of understanding how videoconference technology is currently being used in elementary schools and why this technology is being used in the classroom. However, they all follow just one or a few classes and generalize based off that. This study aims to show what happens when a program like this is very successful in one class, but not another, following what these studies have already done, but in a comparative way, aiming to discover in which situations a videoconference language program can be successful in elementary schools and in which situations it does

not work as well. Moving online in some cases is necessary resulting in various

challenges and varying degrees of success.

Remote Teaching Success

The research on these three programs, as well as additional research, shows many

successes of remote teaching. Macrory et al. (2012), in their study of primary programs in

the EU, showed positive effects of cross-cultural understanding. Being able to see the

students in the other countries, particularly in forming relationships and being able to

note the differences between the schools and their students, seemed to positively affect

the students. The learners seemed to enjoy learning about the different cultures. This

connection also resulted in an increased motivation to learn another language. In the same

way, the results of Thompson and Nutta (2015) and Macrory et al. (2012) also indicate

that students responded favorably to the cross-cultural exchange aspect of the respective

programs.

In terms of the students, Macrory et al. (2012) found that while student production

of the language left something to be desired, students made great gains in terms of

confidence in the language. Students from the context program thought highly of the

program, claiming that it was not harder than learning in a face-to-face class (Rovegno,

2018a).

A common aspect of remote programs is some degree of team teaching. Wadkins,

Wozniak, and Miller (as cited in Pintos & Rovegno, 2018) 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" (p. 61). In the case of

the context program, the responsibilities are divided in that the remote teacher is

responsible for the content knowledge, the classroom teacher is responsible for the contextual knowledge, and the responsibilities of pedagogical knowledge are shared by both teachers (Rovegno, 2018b). In the most successful experiences, the classroom teacher and the remote teacher reviewed the lesson plan together and planned the class jointly (Kaplan & Brovetto, 2018).

Kaplan and Brovetto (2018) note that this collaboration between remote teachers and classroom teachers plays a large part in the success of the experience. They claim that when the collaboration is strong that students' autonomy is boosted, and doors are opened. In order to improve this collaboration, it is necessary to empower the classroom teachers who might feel disadvantaged as they often lack the content knowledge. Signs of an empowered classroom teacher include use of the L2 even with mistakes, active participation in the class, use of the L2 even outside of the language class, and many more.

Team teaching in a remote setting is an advantage in itself, allowing for more expertise as teachers can be recruited from various geographic locations (Collins, 1996). This variety of teachers results in greater general knowledge and different perspectives. This advantage is in line with one of the major reasons to switch to a remote program, which was a lack of teachers, especially in rural areas.

There are a lot of positive sides to this movement towards remote teaching, however, it can be challenging as well. It is important to understand both sides.

Remote Teaching Challenges

Teaching remotely offers challenges that need to be overcome in order to be successful. Some challenges have to do with the technology itself. Technological

problems can be challenging, especially given that many teachers are thrown into remote teaching without proper training in the use of technology (Compton, 2009; Rovegno, 2018b). There needs to be a balance between pedagogy and technology, leaving many programs to determine where that balance lies. Some programs have focused on technology, but lack the pedagogical base (Capurro & Rodríguez Fleitas, 2017). On the other hand, others note a focus on pedagogy without the proper training in the technology itself (Compton, 2009). Going further, Compton (2009) also notes that many teacher education programs lack training in technology despite the importance to teaching today.

On a deeper level, it was mentioned previously that one reason to move towards technology is to help to close the digital divide. However, in focusing on the digital divide, the underlying causes of poverty of marginalization might be ignored (Capurro & Rodríguez Fleitas, 2017). When everything is lacking in students' lives, having a laptop may not make a difference.

Additionally, as mentioned, being a remote teacher requires additional skills to those of a face-to-face language teacher. Remote teachers have also reported feelings of isolation and a lack of support (Shelley et al, 2006). Teachers need to develop technology skills, particularly in the integration of the camera and in the use of body language, which is important in learning and teaching a language.

Finally, specifically to the context program, a SWOT study identified various threats and weaknesses of the program (Kaiser, 2018). Even after several years since the beginning of the program, there is much resistance to the project, particularly in that English is given less priority within schools. The curriculum may be too structured,

especially given the otherwise flexibility of the education system. Additionally, the curriculum may not be appealing to all students.

Technology is a great resource; however, in the end it is a tool that needs to be used in combination with best teaching practices, good collaboration, and a variety of other tools (Thompson & Nutta, 2015).

Conclusion

This chapter has looked at the national public education system in the context in order to better understand the program under consideration, a remote language program in elementary schools. This program's English classes aim to bring quality English education to students across the country through the use of advanced videoconferencing equipment and remote language teachers. The objective of this is to close both technology and education gaps found across the country. In order to understand the program better, it was compared to two other remote foreign language programs in elementary schools.

Through this comparison of remote foreign language programs, several advantages and disadvantages of the modality were found. In each of the programs, remote teachers were used as a way to reach students where teachers are scarce. It was also found that students from all of the programs benefited from the cultural exchange that resulted from having remote teachers. These programs worked best when team teaching took place, with high levels of coordination between the teachers on both sides of the screen.

There are also disadvantages to this modality of teaching. Remote teaching requires a set of skills that traditional teachers do not, by default possess. These skills

regarding the use and management of technology can be learned; however, many teacher training programs lack this aspect. Additionally, regardless of a teacher's skill with technology, remote teaching lends itself to technological problems which often cause interruptions to the class.

While the literature showed many perspectives from students and from classroom teachers, there is little research looking at elementary school remote teaching from the perspectives of the remote teachers. However, remote teachers are an important part of the remote teaching program. Remote teachers from the program under consideration teach up to 40 different classes in a week. Those classes are taught across various cities and contexts, in small classes and in big classes, in rural schools and in urban schools. Therefore, this study looks at the program through the eyes of remote teachers and what defines to them a successful class. In the next chapter, the methodology that was used to accomplish this is explained.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

I am studying remote teachers' views of success in order to identify factors that contribute to success in an elementary school foreign language program because I want to find out in which situations the program works well in order to replicate those circumstances program-wide. The primary research questions I aim to answer are: *1) How do remote teachers define success in their classes? 2) Which factors do remote teachers believe contribute to success in their classes?* I will use the results of my survey and the following interviews to inform my own teaching and to give recommendations to the program.

Overview of the Chapter

This chapter describes the methodologies that were used in this study to explore the research questions. First, it describes the data collection method and the rationale for the choice of method. It then explores the methodology for choosing participants, analyzing the data, and administering the study. Finally, it discusses the ethical considerations considered in order to ensure the anonymity of the participants involved.

Mixed Method Data Collection

For this study, I used a mixed-method design. In my research into the existing literature regarding remote foreign language programs in elementary schools, I found a lack of representation of the voices of the remote teachers themselves. For that reason, I wanted this study to give the opportunity to these teachers to share their experiences and their perspectives as the experts on language learning and teaching.

The study started with a quantitative method, a survey of remote teachers. The survey employed the survey method. As my participant pool was relatively small, this was then followed by a qualitative method, an interview with a few of those teachers. Mixed method data collection is based on the assumption that all research methodologies have weaknesses and aims to minimize these weaknesses (Creswell, 2018).

Creswell (2018) identifies a few different designs of mixed methods data collection. This study used the explanatory sequential mixed methods design in which quantitative research is completed first followed by qualitative. The first phase of this study consisted of a survey that used a Likert scale questionnaire to collect quantitative data. This was followed by open-ended interviews in order to gather qualitative data and to explain and give more detail to the collected quantitative data.

Surveys

Surveys quantitatively describe trends, attitudes, and opinions of a population (Creswell, 2018). Creswell notes the advantages of surveys being the economy of the design as well as the quick turnaround time. Given that this is just the first of two phases of the study, I chose to use the survey method to try to reach the largest possible number of remote teachers.

Questionnaires are a common tool in surveys. This survey used the questionnaire tool. Just as Creswell (2018) says, Gillham (2008) acknowledges questionnaires as being a quick source of data. Questionnaires are very structured in that the researcher has a fixed set of questions and participants have set answers. While Gillham (2008) claims that this is boring for the respondent, my goal is to be able to gather more participants with a relatively quick manner of participating.

Use of the survey gave me an overview of the perspectives of the remote teachers on a whole, serving as the base for the following phase. The survey opened with demographic questions, such as qualifications of teachers and how long they have been teaching. These demographic questions were followed by questions regarding the opinions and attitudes of the remote teachers.

The questions asked surveyed how teachers measure success in their classes and in which classes they are able to achieve that success. Alternatively, the answers might show which classes teachers consider to be more or less successful than their other classes. While the research shows that much of the success of remote language programs derives from characteristics of remote teachers, such as body language, use of technology, and telepresence, this survey considered also factors that are outside of the control of the remote teacher, such as class size (Pintos, 2018; Shelley et al., 2006), gauging to what degree remote teachers think these factor contribute to or limit success. With this information, together with the school demographic information, I drew conclusions as to when the program is successful in the hopes of replicating those circumstances on a larger scale.

Participants for the survey were chosen using a convenience sample. Given the nature of the study, the participants were all my co-workers. While Gillham (2008) recognizes the data collected in a study using convenience sampling is not representative of the population as a whole, it represents the teachers to whom I have access.

Interviews

While surveys are efficient, they may lack complexity and depth (Dörnyei, 2003). For this reason, in order to gain a deeper understanding of remote teacher perspectives,

the survey was followed by interviews with select participants based on the responses to the survey.

This follows what Creswell (2018) calls an explanatory sequential mixed method approach. According to this framework, first quantitative data is gathered, and the results are analyzed, in this study's case this was in the form of a survey. After the analysis of this quantitative data, a more qualitative approach is taken, in this study through interviews, in order to delve deeper into and to explain further the results of the quantitative survey.

The survey was used to look for trends as to which factors remote teachers consider to contribute to success. Once those trends have been established following the analysis of the data, the interview allowed participants to expand on the idea, for example illustrating a case in which they saw a particular factor acting, by contributing either positively or negatively, in the success of the class. As the interviews were retrospective, the prompts were the participants' answers to the survey itself (Dörnyei, 2003).

Data Collection

Participants

This study took place in a South American country. Seven teachers participated in the survey and three in the follow-up interview. The remote teachers considered in this study were all based in the capital of the country, though their classes were located throughout the country. They taught from private language institutes. Most of the equipment they used was provided either by the program or the institute. They used a videoconference computer that was used to connect with schools across the country. They had a camera and a microphone. They also had remotes that controlled not only

their equipment and camera, but also the cameras of the remote classrooms, so they were able to move their camera to give the impression of being in the room. The remote teachers were a mixed group of native English speakers and native Spanish speakers coming from the United States, Brazil, Uruguay, and Zimbabwe. They were all my co-workers.

The teaching qualifications of the participants included the following, with some participants having more than one of these qualifications:

- Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) certificate

- Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) certificate

- Bachelor of Arts in English degree

- Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA), provided by the Cambridge English Language Assessment)

- Teaching certificates from local English language institutes

Five participants (71.4%) have been teaching English for five or more years, one (14.3%) for four years, and one (14.3%) for two years. Specifically teaching for this remote program, three (42.9%) participants have taught for the program for three years, one (14.3%) for two years, and three (42.9%) for two years. The interviews revealed a scenario that had not occurred to me. Two of the three teachers interviewed did not have teaching experience before beginning to work for this program.

I had anticipated having a wider range of teachers; however, the current coronavirus situation limited my selection pool. I chose to include only teachers who have taught for the program for at least one year, as all teachers were at the time working in a different capacity than the study aims to explore. Participants were asked to consider

their experiences in the previous year, 2019, disregarding the current year, in order to explore the program in its standard modality. While all teachers worked for the same English institute at the time of the study, many either worked for another in the past or worked for multiple institutes at the time of the study.

Location/Setting

Data collection took place in the capital city of the country under consideration. The capital is a city of about 1.5 million inhabitants, approximately half of the total population of the country. However, the classes of the teachers were based across the country. Classes were located in both rural and urban locations. Classes located in rural areas often consisted of more than one grade in a single class. Class sizes ranged from just a few students to up to 40 or more students. Some schools had had English in the school for many years while others were just starting.

Procedure

For the first phase, the survey, I sent the Google form by email to my co-workers who had worked for the program the previous year, 2019. Participation was limited to teachers from this institute, as permission to conduct the study had been obtained only at the institute level. Participants had two weeks to complete the survey. The survey began with personal demographic information, followed by professional demographic information, and finally questions regarding the attitudes and perspectives of the remote teachers regarding their past classes.

After the two weeks, the results were gathered and analyzed. Interview participants were chosen based on the responses to the survey. For the interview I chose participants who had strong attitudes on some topic from the survey and participants with

opposing views on a topic. In the interviews, participants were asked to expand on their answers from the survey and provide examples.

The interviews were conducted online as most remote teachers were still abiding by quarantine regulations as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The interviews were recorded.

Data Analysis

The data collected from the survey was entered into a Google spreadsheet where I analyzed it and looked for patterns. First, I analyzed the demographic information looking for the average time that teachers had been working for the program as well.

In the next part of the survey, participants used a Likert scale to rate, to what degree they felt certain factors had contributed to success in their classes. These answers were coded on a scale of 1 to 5. I looked at the average scores of each factor as well as looked for any factor that stood out more than the others as a positive contribution to success. I used the trends that I found in this analysis to guide the questions in the interviews.

In order to ensure the reliability of the study, I first piloted both the survey and the interview with a teacher who had worked for the program for less than one year and was thus ineligible for the study. This helped to ensure that the questions were clear. In order to ensure the validity, I took into account the information that I hope to gather from this study, that being which factors remote teachers consider to contribute to success in a remote teaching program in elementary school. Therefore, the questions considered predicted responses, and the pilot study checked that the questions were on target.

Ethics

In order to maintain the integrity of the study and the protection of the participating remote teachers, the following measures were employed. First, I obtained permission to conduct this study from the Institutional Review Board at Hamline University. Participants signed informed consent releases. Additionally, pseudonyms were used to protect the participants and to allow them to share their experiences freely. All data was stored on a personal, password-protected laptop with all files containing identifying information also being password protected.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I described the methods used in this study that aims to explore which factors remote teachers consider to be key in the success of their classes in elementary school English as a foreign language class. I explained the rationales for using a mixed methods approach, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews. The next chapter presents the results of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

The purpose of this study is to investigate the perspectives of remote English teachers regarding the success of their videoconference classes because I want to find out if remote classes are a viable option for language learning and teaching in elementary schools. While the literature examines similar programs in a variety of settings, there is a lack of perspective from the remote language teachers themselves. By identifying situations in which the model being studied succeeds, I hope to replicate the ideal circumstances on a larger scale.

My primary research questions are: *1) How do remote teachers define success in their classes? 2) Which factors do remote teachers believe contribute to success in their classes?* I hope to use the results of this study first to be able to improve my own classes and, on a larger scale, to inform the program.

Overview

This chapter describes the results of this study. It is divided into two parts addressing each of the two research questions. This data was collected using a short survey sent to participants by email and follow-up interviews with select participants.

The survey received seven responses. The survey was administered to remote English teachers of a program in a South American country that uses videoconference technology and remote teachers in order to provide English instruction to schools across the country. A more detailed description of this program can be found in Chapter Two.

In addition to demographic information, the survey asked about remote teacher perceptions of the success in their classes using primarily Likert scale questions to

measure the importance of various factors on the success of classes from the points of view of the remote teachers. The second set of questions also included open-ended questions, giving participants the opportunity to expand on their answers if they felt it to be necessary.

Following the survey, an interview was conducted, giving survey participants the opportunity to expand on their responses and experiences. Three remote teachers participated in the interview. All teachers were asked the same base questions, though their answers guided the interviews. Interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes.

The first interview was with Ana (pseudonyms are used for all participants), a remote teacher from Brazil now living in the country being studied. Ana has worked for the program for two years, the second year being under the COVID-19 contingency plan. In addition to being a remote teacher, she also serves as a coordinator for the program for one of the English institutes that provides teachers. She taught three groups of students in two different schools under the standard remote program and has two groups under the 2020 contingency plan.

The second interview was with Briana, a native English-speaker from Zimbabwe, now living in the country of study. Briana brings a unique perspective to the study because teaching remotely for this program was her first teaching experience. In the years since beginning teaching for the program, she has started teaching in-person classes as well. She estimates that she has taught about 100 total groups of students for the program, both in the primary program, which is the focus of this study, as well as in the secondary school conversation class program. She generally has 30 groups per year.

The third interview was with Carson, an English teacher from the United States living in the country of study. Like Briana, teaching remotely for this program was Carson's first experience teaching English after he found himself looking for a job in a foreign country. Since starting to teach for the program, he has begun teaching in-person classes. Carson also has experience teaching piano and Spanish. Carson has taught about 30 classes total for the program, with 19 classes maximum in a year.

How do remote teachers define success?

This section aims to answer the first research question: how do remote teachers define success in their classes? This question was asked in the survey as an open-ended question and was also a common topic in the interviews. The seven survey answers included common themes.

The element that the most survey participants mentioned was student production of the target language. Five survey participants (71.4%) mentioned that they feel that a class is successful when students are able to use the target language by the end of the class. Another of these themes is engagement. Four survey participants (57.1%) indicated that they consider a class successful if students are engaged in the class and actively participating. Other answers focused on how students feel in the class, with different teachers feeling successful when students seem happy (one survey participant, 14.1%), confident (one survey participant, 14.1%), or interested (one survey participant, 14.1%), or when students and teachers enjoy the class (two survey participants, 28.2%). Finally, one survey participant (14.1%) considered a successful class to be one in which students progress from the level at which they began the class. In the interviews, the participants echoed these themes.

Each interview participant was asked to describe a lesson that they felt had been successful. Ana described a class that she taught in the program that she considered to be a successful class. She described a particular day in which not many students attended school. The lesson that day was about free time activities. Students talked about what famous people like doing in their free time. She felt the students were having fun and, because there were few students, all were able to speak and participate actively in the lesson. This increased engagement continued even beyond that one lesson, as Ana noted that following that day, the students who attended that day's lesson, especially those who usually did not participate, were more engaged. Talking about the same group, Ana felt that they were also particularly engaged in a lesson about jobs and what they want to do when they grow up. These seem to indicate that the lesson topic is critical to the success of the class.

On the other hand, Ana described a challenging lesson that she had taught. Just as content that interested the students also motivated and engaged them, content that was too difficult for the level of the students was demotivating. The curriculum that this class was following, the third year of the program, was challenging and the students were not interested in the topic.

Briana described a successful class that she had taught in the secondary program. While that is not the focus of this study, she felt that the class was successful because she had been teaching a topic that the students found interesting and relatable: healthy diets and eating disorders. Even though this was in the secondary program, Briana maintained that the content of the lesson and its relevance to the students is critical in a successful class and in engaging students.

Carson was unable to think of a particular lesson but noted that he was successful in a level 3 (sixth grade) unit about stories. The unit includes a pirate story, a treasure hunt story, and a ghost story, among others. This unit built upon a common theme, telling stories, giving the students a structure that they could anticipate in following lessons. The topic was enjoyable both to the students and to Carson, as the remote teacher. This particular unit also includes a lot of videos in addition to reading, appealing to students who prefer listening.

These three examples provided in the interviews illustrate the importance of the content in their lessons. When students felt interested in the topic or when students were able to relate to the content, they were more engaged in the lesson, leaving the remote teachers feeling successful.

**Which factors do remote teachers believe contribute to success?**

The following questions are Likert scale questions which asked survey participants to what degree they felt a series of factors contribute to success in their classes on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 indicating *no contribution* and 5 indicating *high contribution*. These questions aimed to answer the second research question: which factors do remote teachers believe contribute to the success in their classes? These factors were based both on the findings in the research regarding teaching by videoconference as well as on my own experiences as a remote teacher for this program.

Of these six factors, as shown in Figure 1, the one that the survey participants consider to contribute the most to the success of their classes is the involvement of the classroom teacher in lesson A, with an average score of 4.9 (of 5). This is followed by the completion of lessons B and C, with an average of 3.7. The third most important factor is

the social context of the school (average 3.2). The survey participants considered the

remaining factors to be less important. These factors, in decreasing importance are: time

of day of the class (average score of 3), class size (average of 2.9), and the classroom

teacher's knowledge of English (average 1.9). This section describes each of these factors

in further detail.

**Figure 1**

Factors Contributing to Success
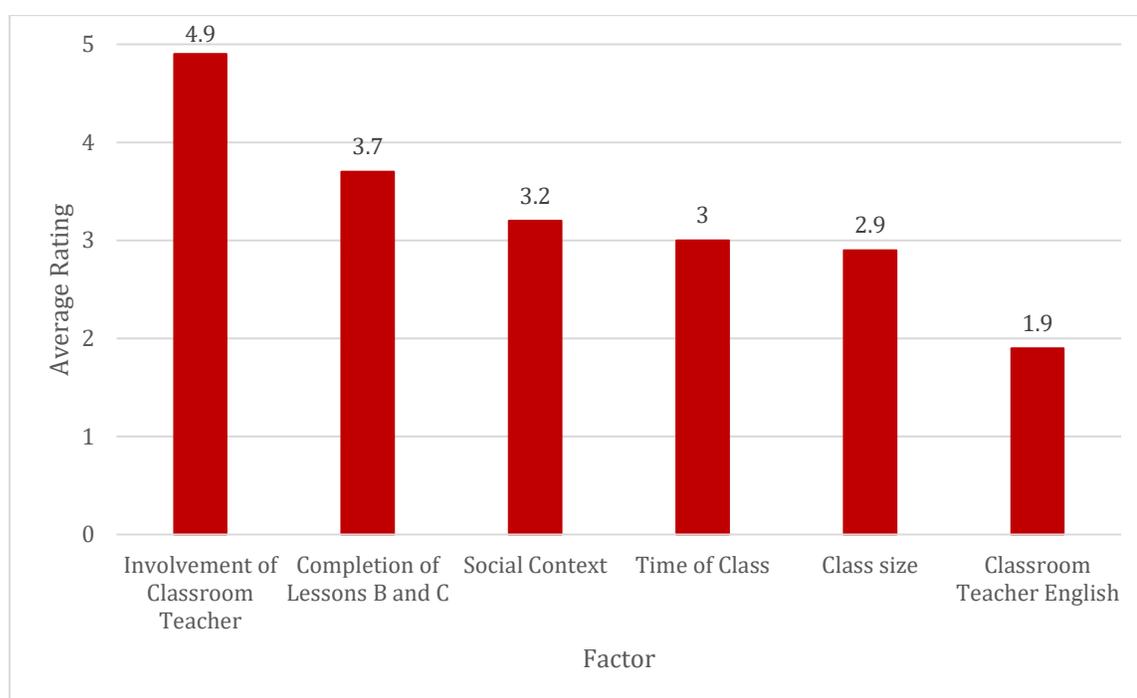
Classroom Teacher Involvement

The first of these factors is the classroom teacher's involvement in the class. As

mentioned in Chapter Two, the program follows a cyclical plan. The remote English

teacher teaches the 45-minute lesson A, which includes the presentation of language.

Following this, the classroom teacher, who does not usually speak English, teaches two

45-minute lessons, lessons B and C, which include activities suggested by the remote

teacher to support lesson A (Banegas, 2013).

This collaboration between the classroom teacher and the remote teacher makes team-teaching a necessity. It has been shown that in successful experiences, both teachers are active in the planning and implementation of the lesson (Kaplan & Brovetto, 2018). As shown in Figure 2, six survey participants (85.7%) consider the involvement of the classroom teacher in lesson A as having a *high contribution* to the success of the class. One survey participant (14.3%) marked 4 on the scale.

Figure 2

Classroom Teacher (CT) Involvement in Lesson A
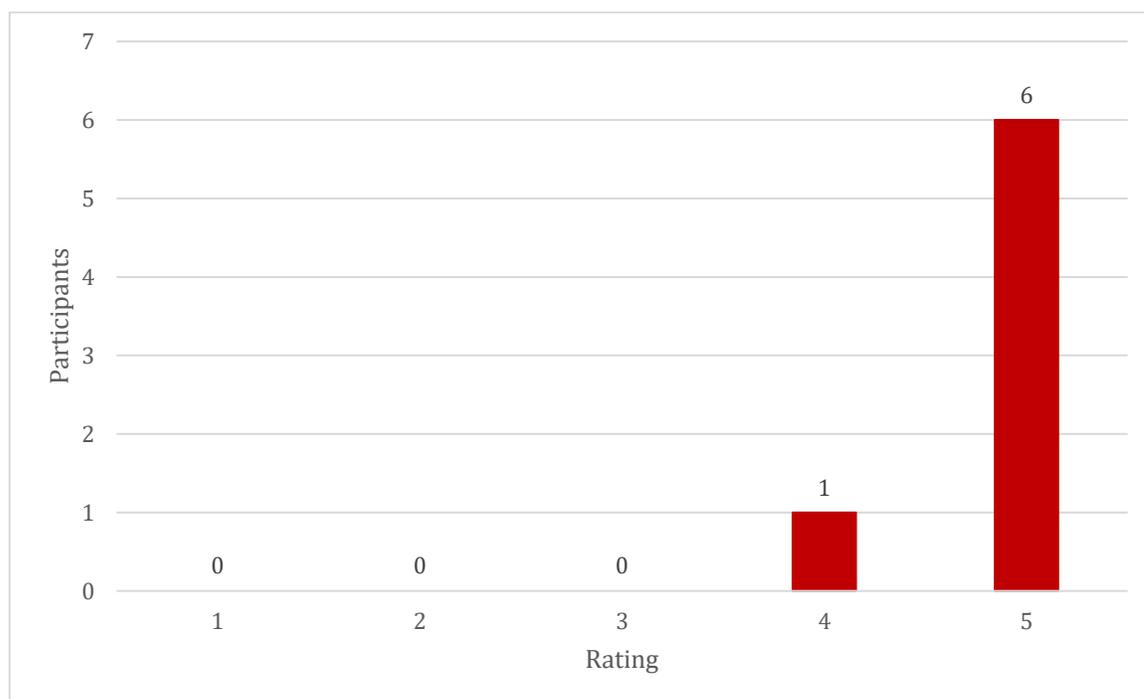
When asked in the interview how the classroom teacher can be involved in a way that is helpful to the remote teacher, Ana said that the most important way is that the classroom teacher is simply active in the class. She felt that often the classroom teachers check out because "the students are with the remote teacher." Sometimes the classroom

teacher is not paying attention or is not even in the classroom. However, being on a screen is not the same as physically being in the classroom.

Ana claimed that the most helpful way for a classroom teacher to be involved is in classroom management, such as keeping students on task, redirecting attention to the remote teacher, and ensuring students have the materials required for the class—the aspects of teaching that are lacking in a remote setting. Carson echoed this, saying that the classes work the best when the classroom teacher is the "hands and feet" of the remote teacher, doing the physical tasks that the remote teacher cannot do.

Briana described a very particular situation she once had. The class was in a small, rural school. As happens frequently in rural schools, the class was mixed grades, with fifth and sixth grade composing a single class. As the class was large, she worked with half of the class while the classroom teacher worked with the other half on other subjects. Because the classroom teacher was busy with the other half of the students, Briana had no classroom management help. Sometimes the students would swear into the microphones or even get into physical fights. While this was a particular situation, it shows the importance of the classroom teacher in managing behavior during the lesson, something that is exceedingly difficult for a teacher behind a screen.

Beyond simply the involvement of the classroom teacher in the remote English lesson, the remote teachers mentioned the importance of the relationship between the two teachers. When asked about challenges in remote classes and strategies for overcoming those challenges, Ana explained that the biggest challenge is team teaching. Generally, classes are assigned only a few days before the start of the school year, so teachers do not have time to build relationships. Because the schools are located across the country, the

remote and classroom teachers usually cannot physically meet before classes start and most often never do.

For Ana there is also some degree of language barrier between them as she must communicate with classroom teachers in her third language, Spanish. However, this relationship generally improves throughout the year which has a positive impact on the class. Ana also had the opportunity to visit the two schools in which she had classes and was therefore able to meet the teachers and students. This relationship improved the lessons she taught.

While classroom management was the way that all participants thought the classroom teacher should be involved in the remote English lessons, the interviews revealed some other ways for the classroom teacher to be involved. Briana noted that it is helpful for the classroom teacher to show interest in and participate in the lesson. She described a group that she had in the past. The classroom teacher was supportive of the English class and participated along with the students. That teacher went on maternity leave, and the attitude of the substitute teacher was the opposite. The substitute teacher did the bare minimum and showed no interest in the lessons. Briana noted that this completely changed the attitude of the students in the class. Unfortunately, she has found that many classroom teachers are reluctant to take an active participant in English classes because they do not want to be seen as the "dumb teacher."

The survey revealed this factor, the involvement of the classroom teacher, to be the most important factor in successful remote class. This was clearly supported in the interviews, as all participants discussed the topic at length. Based on the interviews, this is because it is almost impossible for a teacher to effectively manage classroom behavior

without physically being present. The remote teachers require assistance with the hands-on aspects of teaching. Without that help from the classroom teachers, the lessons become particularly challenging.

Completion of Lessons B and C

The next factor is the completion of lessons B and C. While some classroom teachers very diligently complete the cycle, others do not. As shown in Figure 3, five survey participants (71.4%) selected 4 on the scale, indicating that this is an important factor, but perhaps not the most important. The other two survey participants (28.6%) marked 3. This factor did not come up in the interviews.

Figure 3

*Completion of Lessons B and C*
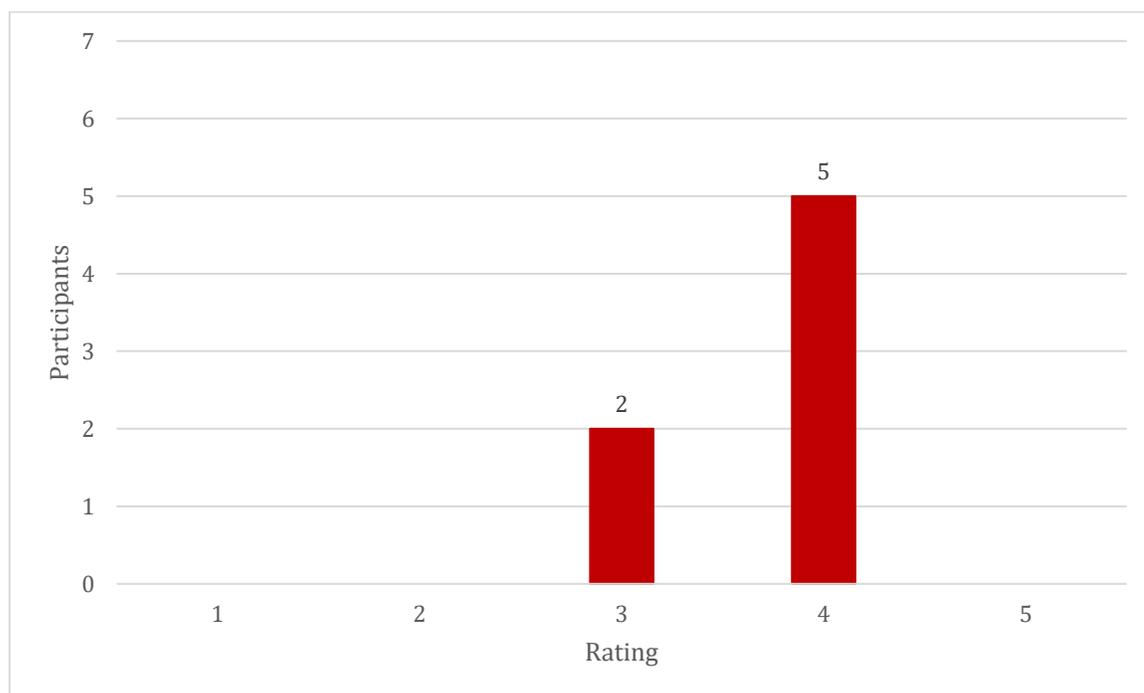
Social Context

Another factor that survey participants responded to was the social context of the school. Public schools in the country being studied are divided into five quintiles

according to the social context, with one being the lowest context and five being the highest context. Schools classified as quintiles 1 and 2 are considered A.PR.EN.D.E.R (Atención Prioritaria en Entornos con Dificultades Estructurales Relativas—Priority Attention in Environments of Relative Structural Difficulty) schools and offer additional support to their students (Santiago et al., 2016). The OECD (Santiago, 2016). noted that the socioeconomic context of both the students and the schools had a large impact on the performance of students.

The survey participants seemed to agree that the context of the school is important, though not the most important factor in question. As seen in Figure 4, three survey participants (42.9%) marked 4 on the Likert scale, three (42.9%) marked 3, and one (14.3%) marked 2.

Figure 4

Social Context of the School
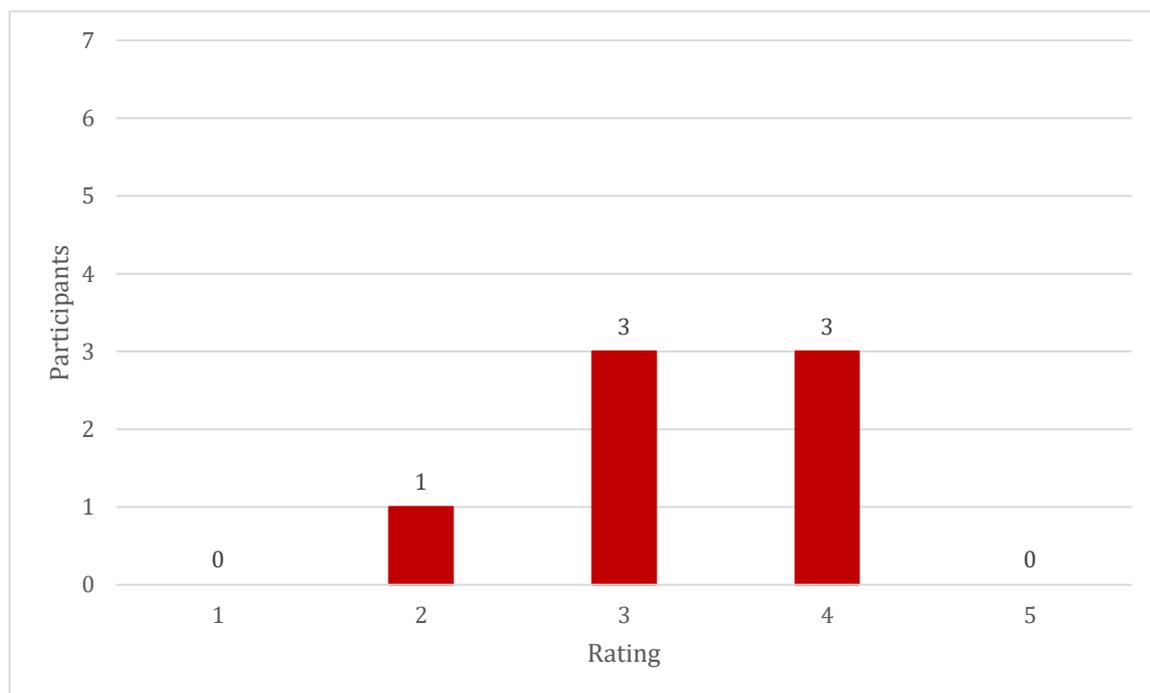
Carson noted that his more challenging classes were those from a particular school. The school was located in a critical context. The teachers from the school told him that it was not uncommon for students to go to school hungry. Especially as his classes were on Mondays, it was possible that students had not eaten since the previous Friday. Naturally, these conditions are not ideal for learning.

Time of Lesson

The next factor was the time of day of the class. As described in Chapter Two, most public schools in the country being studied operate for only four hours a day. Students usually only attend class either in the morning or the afternoon. Additionally, within the shift that students attend, the class time might affect the class if it is immediately before or after other activities, such as lunch/breakfast (depending on the shift) or recess. The responses to this question were varied, as shown in Figure 5. One survey participant (14.3%) marked 1, or no contribution, one (14.3%) marked 2, two (28.6%) marked 3, and three (42.9%) marked 4.

Figure 5

Time of Lesson
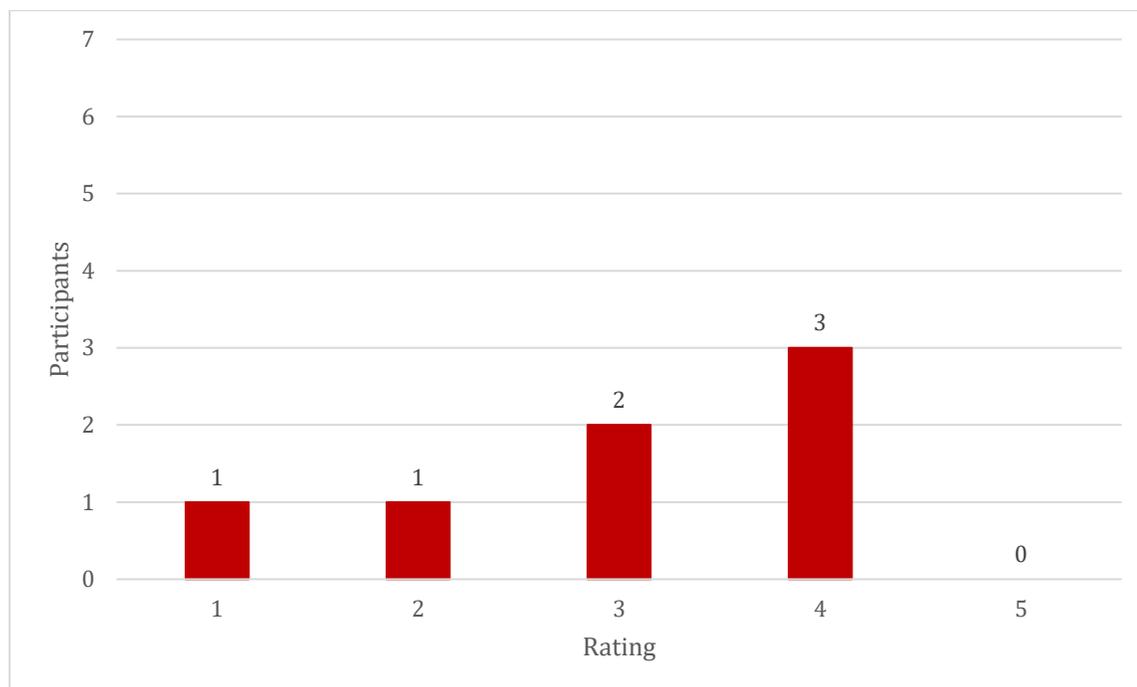
When asked about a challenging lesson, Ana remembered a group that she had

had at the end of the day on Fridays. It was a 6th grade class in the third and final year of

the program. Because of the time and day of the class, both students and teachers were

tired, and, as a result, the lessons were less fruitful. Carson also noted a class that he had

taught at the end of the day on Mondays. Because it was the last class of the day, and the

classroom teachers were not very involved in the lessons, the students were

rambunctious, and there were many interruptions, such as parents arriving early to pick

their children up.

Class Size

The following factor was class size. As the survey participants answered in the

first set of survey questions, class sizes in the program range from fewer than ten students

to more than thirty. As shown in Figure 6, one survey participant (14.3%) marked that this has a high contribution to the success of the class. Three survey participants (42.9%) chose 3 and three (42.9%) chose 2.

Figure 6

Class Size
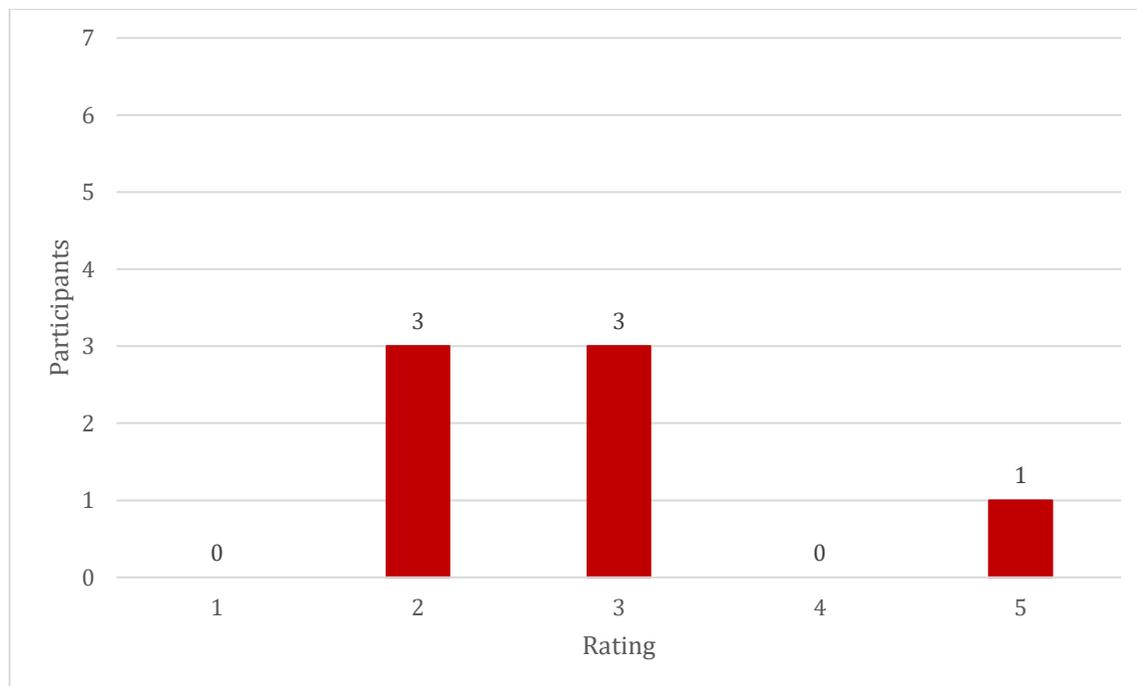
When asked about challenges in remote classes, Carson first mentioned the size of the class. Being on a screen, it is harder for a remote teacher to connect with the students. Sometimes it can be difficult to see or hear the students in the back of the classroom, as there is only one microphone in the classroom. Also, having a large class makes it easier for students to hide and not be active in the lesson. These limitations of the classroom make teaching large classes remotely more challenging.

Ana also mentioned class size as changing the lesson. In describing a successful class, she described a lesson in which few students attended school because of bad

weather conditions. There were fewer than 10 students that day. Like Carson, Ana felt

that the small class size created better conditions both for teaching and learning.

Classroom Teacher's Knowledge of English

The final factor is the classroom teacher's knowledge of English. As shown in

Figure 7, on the survey, four participants (57.1%) selected that this factor has no

contribution, while 3 participants (42.9%) selected 3. This was the least important factor

according to the survey.

Figure 7

CT Knowledge of English
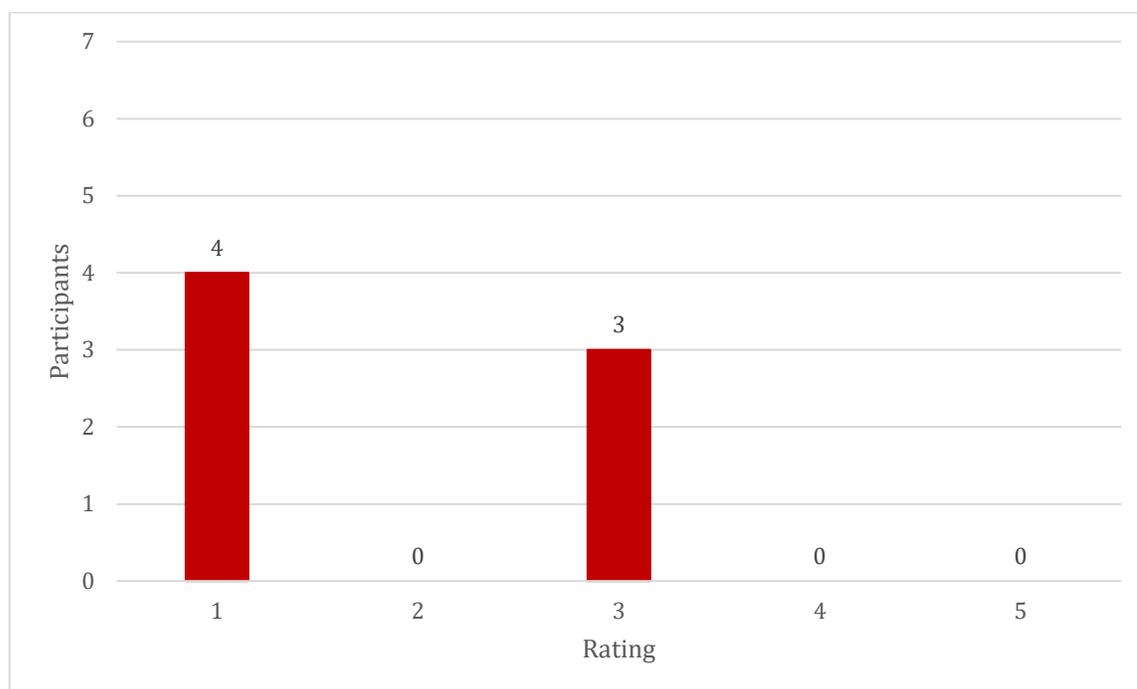
Interview participants were asked to expand on this. Both Ana and Briana prefer

that the classroom teacher does not speak English at all. Ana explained that when the

classroom teacher understands English, it results in more direct translation and potentially

teaching wrong pronunciation. The relationship between the remote teacher and the

classroom teacher is a delicate one, which makes Ana feel uncomfortable correcting the classroom teacher, leading to incorrect models of the target language. Similarly, Briana felt that when classroom teachers speak English, they become "helicopter teachers," taking over the teaching of the lesson and, in some cases, teaching incorrect forms or pronunciation.

Ana and Carson also expressed that the classroom teacher learning alongside the students helps motivate students and convey the importance of learning the language while also serving as a positive example of language learning. This also provides a positive model of language learning.

Other

The final question of the survey was open-ended and asked for any other factors that participants believe contribute to the success of their classes. One survey participant responded to this question. This teacher explained that often "preconceived negative views on English" are at play, potentially picked up from family members or other community members. This remote teacher, who also teaches for another branch of the program which teaches English conversation classes, also by videoconference, to high school classes. This teacher points out that the high school program stresses cultural exchange, and that this could be useful in the primary program as well in order to give students a "why" to learning English.

Another factor that I had not included in the survey, but that was present throughout the interviews, was the technology itself. While the technology is of a high quality, the challenges mentioned were generally tied to the technology. For example, the involvement of the classroom teacher is made necessary by the technology, as it is

physically not possible for the remote teacher to perform all of the duties teaching entails. Additionally, Carson noted that large classes are more challenging because it is difficult to both hear and see the students at the back of the room because there is only one camera and one microphone in the classroom. Even having mastery of the technology, some elements of teaching remain lacking.

Briana discussed the technology, as well. Given the equipment that the program uses, the remote teacher sees all of the students on a single camera. Depending on the number of students and the size of the classroom, it can be very difficult to distinguish faces and thus learn the names of the students. In fact, under the COVID-19 contingency plan, classes are held with each student connecting from his or her own laptop, provided by the program. Briana feels this has improved the rapport with her students as she can see all of the faces and she has been able to learn all of the names of her students. This has made the class more dynamic and engaging. Despite the difficulty connecting with students, Briana actually prefers teaching remote classes to in-person classes because she feels she is more of a presence in the classroom remotely.

Finally, Carson mentioned, as opposed to other classes that he teaches outside of the program, is that as English is part of the public school curriculum, students are not necessarily there by choice. In fact, the classroom teachers do not opt into the program either, but rather the school opts in, meaning that the classroom teacher also may not be involved by choice. This means that sometimes students and teachers do not care about the class and are unable to see the relevance of learning English.

Conclusion

Despite the range of experiences and qualifications of the remote teachers participating in the survey and the interviews, several common themes emerged.

Another common theme that I had not considered was the content of the lessons. The program provides the lesson plans. While the remote teachers have the freedom to adapt the lessons, the topics are fixed. The remote teachers noted that students feel more interested and engaged in some topics than in others. When students are interested in the topic, the class is more successful.

The next chapter explores the implications of the data from the survey and the interview. It looks at how remote teachers can use this information to better their own classes. However, much of the success of classes is determined by factors that are out of the control of the remote teacher. For that reason, the next chapter also provides recommendations for the program for how to be able to improve the remote classes on a larger scale.

CHAPTER 5:

Conclusion

In this paper, I aimed to answer the following research questions: *1) How do remote teachers define success in their classes? 2) Which factors do remote teachers believe contribute to success in their classes?* My objectives in answering these questions were to both inform and improve my own classes and to inform the program of the ideal environment for remote English classes in elementary schools. From my experiences working as a remote teacher for this program, I believe that the program is a great option to be able to provide English classes on a large scale; however, I have noted that some classes seem to work better than others. This chapter explores the findings of the study, its limitations, the implications, and what research remains to be done.

Findings

I was able to answer the first two research questions with the results from the survey and the interview. The survey gave numbers, while the interviews gave personal experience and anecdotal evidence. As this study took place at the end of the school year in a particularly difficult year as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, all of the participants, both in the survey and the interviews seemed to be much more positive about the program than I had anticipated.

My first research question was: *How do remote teachers define success in their classes?* I was able to answer this question using an open-ended question in the survey. Of the seven responses, the overall theme was that remote teachers feel successful when their students are engaged in the lessons. The follow-up interviews revealed that this

engagement often comes from interest in the topic and a feeling of relevance of the lesson to the lives of the students.

My second research question was: *Which factors do remote teachers believe contribute to success in their classes?* This was addressed in the survey through Likert scale questions of the factors that I had considered. The follow-up interviews provided evidence of the responses from the survey. The survey revealed that the factor that remote teachers consider to be the most important in the success of their classes is the involvement of the classroom teacher in the lessons. Rovegno (2018b) and Kaplan and Brovetto (2018) highlighted the importance of team-teaching in this model, which was echoed by the remote teachers who participated in this study.

On the other hand, the survey revealed the least important factor is the classroom teacher's knowledge of English. As discussed in the literature review, team-teaching in a model such as this one requires the division of tasks, with the classroom teacher because in charge of contextual knowledge, the remote English teacher in charge of the content knowledge, and both teachings responsible for the pedagogical knowledge (Rovegno, 2018b). In the survey and the interview, the participants confirmed this division of tasks, asserting that the classroom teacher does not need to know English, the content of the class, in this case.

In both the survey and the interviews, participants mentioned other factors that I had not considered and therefore had not included in the survey, such as the negative perception students have of English, often learned from their family and community.

The next section looks at the limitations of this study.

Limitations

One limitation of this study was the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the remote program itself. Teachers spent the whole year teaching from their homes. While the program is remote by nature, the standard curriculum depends on the students being together in their classrooms with a classroom teacher. That was not possible this year, however, creating the need for the program to create a contingency plan that changed the modality of work. As all of the research took the standard program into consideration, participants were asked to reflect on previous years teaching for the program. Despite that, reflections of the current year and current modality found their way into the thoughts and opinions of the remote teacher participants.

On a similar note, because teachers were asked to reflect on previous years, the participant pool was significantly limited as only remote teachers with more than a year of experience. I had expected more teachers to be able to participate in the study, and, had teachers new to the program been able to participate, a larger sample size would have been possible. Pandemic aside, this study included seven teachers, all of whom work for the same provider. In reality, the program hires institutes as providers from several different countries spanning three continents. A larger participant group and a more diverse participant group, from different institutes and even different countries, would be able to provide a more accurate perception of the program and its success.

Implications

Several implications and recommendations for both the remote teachers of the program and the program itself emerge from the results of the study, both the survey and the interview, together with the existing literature. My primary goal was to be able to

improve my own remote English classes. Therefore, the implications and recommendations pertaining to the teachers are addressed first. However, many of the challenges that the survey and interview participants discussed involved factors that are outside of the control of the remote teacher. Then the implications and recommendations for the program as a whole are discussed. Both of these sections aim to consider what makes a successful class and replicate those conditions on a larger scale.

Implications for Remote Teachers

While this study revealed many factors, both contributing to successful and challenging lessons that are outside of the control of the remote teachers, this section looks at what remote teachers can do to be more successful in their classes such as adapt lesson plans and build strong relationships with classroom teachers.

First of all, the results reveal that the most successful classes involve topics that the students find interesting and relevant. Although the program provides the lesson plans, remote teachers have the freedom to adapt the plans as necessary as long as the lesson objectives are met. Remote teachers who participated in the study mentioned a couple different ideas to adapt the lessons to make them interesting to the students. One way to do this is to include famous people that the students like. For example, when talking about likes and dislikes, teachers could ask what a singer, actor, or athlete that the students all know likes or dislikes.

For older students in the program, successful classes included a variety of learning styles, such as listening activities, reading activities, and speaking activities. Including a variety of activities keeps the students active and engaged in the class.

An important factor in the success of classes was the involvement of the classroom teacher in the remote English lessons. The classroom teacher and the remote teacher are a team-teaching partnership, making the rapport between them essential. Remote teachers should work from the beginning of the year to build and support this relationship. Several participants indicated that the classroom teacher often is reluctant to be an active part of the class because they do not speak English. This echoed Chapter Two. In Chapter Two, one challenge mentioned was the possible disadvantage of classroom teachers who do not speak English, which may lead to feelings of disempowerment (Kaplan & Brovetto, 2018).

One step the remote teachers can take is to reinforce the classroom teacher's role in the lesson, most importantly in classroom management. In the team-teaching partnership, the remote teachers are the *content* experts; however, the classroom teachers are the *context* experts. They are the ones who know the students closely, who know which activities best engage the students. In their initial contact with the classroom teachers, the remote teachers should emphasize this role and its importance to the success of the lesson.

Besides that, this study revealed that it is motivating to the students for the classroom teachers to take an active role in the lesson beyond the classroom management. In many cases, the classroom teacher can serve as a positive model for language learning. One participant also mentioned that sometimes students enter the class with negative perceptions of English, learned from their communities, or feelings that English is not relevant to their lives. Therefore, in addition to serving as a positive language learning model, the classroom teacher participating and being active in the lesson gives relevance

to the lesson, thus encouraging students more. For this reason, also in the initial contact with the classroom teachers, the remote teachers should encourage them to actively participate in the lessons and to ask questions.

The remaining implications involve factors that are outside of the control of the remote teachers. In the next section, recommendations are be given to the program in order to address these factors.

Implications for the Program

This section discusses the implications of this study for the program as a whole, looking to replicate the conditions of successful classes on a larger scale. This program reaches over 100,000 students. By optimizing these successful conditions, the program can change English education nationwide. This section looks at what the program can do to facilitate more successful classes on a larger scale, such as training of all parties involved in the program, a decrease of class sizes, and the creation of engaging and relevant lesson plans.

What the participants in this study considered to be the most important factor affecting the success of their lessons was the involvement of the classroom teacher. However, there seems to be no standard expectation of what the classroom teachers should do in the English lessons nor is there any training for the classroom teachers. It would benefit all participants in the program—the classroom teachers, the remote teachers, and most importantly, the students—for a common training to be implemented for the classroom teachers so that there is a common understanding of the expectations of their role in the team-teaching model employed in this program and also for opportunities

to be provided for remote teachers and classroom teachers to meet before the start of the year.

Another factor that remote teachers discussed was the size of the class. Remote teachers have anywhere from just a couple students to more than 40 students in a class. Such a wide range makes it difficult for the remote teachers to plan the lessons. Besides that, it is easy in the large groups for students to disappear in the back of the room, leaving just a handful of students active in the English lesson. It would benefit everyone involved in this program for class sizes to be smaller. One survey participant noted that on a particular day that very few students attended the English lesson because of weather conditions, student engagement and participation increased both that day and in following lessons. The smaller class size gave all students the opportunity to participate and allowed the English teacher to better personalize the lesson to the students.

Another factor, as previously mentioned, affecting the success of the remote English lessons is the content of the lesson plans. While remote teachers should make adaptations to the lesson plans in order to best engage and motivate students. However, the program would benefit from revising the lesson plans and the overall curriculum to make it more interesting and relevant to students. The interview participants mentioned that students liked lessons that provided for a variety of learning styles, that included famous people, or that included topics relevant to their lives. A reform of the curriculum could take this into account to create more meaningful lesson plans.

The final recommendation for the program regards the technology itself. While the technology used is well developed to this purpose, the interview participants mentioned that particularly in the large classes, it can often be difficult to see and hear

students in the back of the room. It also makes it hard to learn the names of those students. This, in turn, contributes to the previously mentioned problem of just a few students participating in the lessons. The technology needs to provide equal opportunities for all of the students in the class, not just those who sit at the front of the room.

Further Research

As this was a small study, further research remains to be done to gain a better understanding of the program and the classes that it offers. It would be beneficial to conduct a similar study including a wider range of teachers. Including teachers from other institutes may be useful as each institute provides support in different ways. It would also be interesting to include teachers from institutes from other countries in order to gain more perspectives.

Further research could also include other players in the program. On one hand, other players from the side of the program could be involved, such as quality managers. On the other, those from the school side could also be involved, such as the classroom teachers and the school directors. As it was seen in this study, the biggest factor impacting the program is the involvement of the classroom teacher and the collaboration between the remote and classroom teachers, a study involving both parties would be enlightening.

Conclusion

In just two years working as a remote teacher for this program, I have experienced a whirlwind of emotions and opinions about it. Some days make me feel excited and optimistic. Other days make me want to give up. However, the world is turning more and more towards technology. The possibilities that technology brings allow us to open the

world. This program allows children of all locations and of all contexts to be able to study English. It allows them to broaden their horizons and see not only a language, but a culture, different from their own. For many of these children, this is the only opportunity they have to learn English. This makes me optimistic because education is for all students.

For that reason, I wanted to maximize those days that make me feel optimistic and excited. I wanted to talk to other teachers to find what makes those days—what fosters success in the remote language learning classroom, especially with young learners. In fact, what this study has shown is that success is within reach. Success in this environment depends on a strong commitment from the educators involved. It depends on a strong team of co-teachers. It depends on creating interesting and meaningful content. As is, these conditions are not always met. However, they are attainable. By strengthening bonds and engaging students, we can make a difference in making the world a smaller place.

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