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Maestría en Lingüística Aplicada a la Enseñanza del Inglés

**From Face-to-Face to Online Teaching: The Case of Six English Teachers towards the
Change of Modality**

TESIS

Para Obtener el Grado de Maestro en Lingüística Aplicada a la Enseñanza del Inglés

PRESENTA

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Resumen

El presente trabajo tiene como objetivo explorar las experiencias de seis profesores de inglés con relación al cambio y la implementación de la modalidad virtual durante la pandemia de la Covid-19 en Colombia y México. Se pretende informar sobre los retos exteriorizados y las decisiones tomadas por los profesores para contrarrestar dichos desafíos. Para esto, la investigación se enfoca en tres elementos relacionados a la modalidad a distancia, la presencia docente y las tecnologías de la comunicación y la información. En cuanto a la metodología de la investigación, se utiliza un paradigma cualitativo en forma de estudio de caso descriptivo. Los instrumentos para la recolección de los datos se componen de una entrevista semiestructurada y un cuestionario. Para obtener los resultados, se hace uso del análisis temático.

El estudio sugiere que los profesores de inglés percibieron un cambio progresivo en cuanto a la implementación de la modalidad virtual, la cual fue mejorando en la medida en que ellos se fueron acostumbrando a este tipo de instrucción. Por otro lado, el proceso de enseñanza virtual sigue presentando desafíos en términos de infraestructura necesaria para mediar el contenido y promover el aprendizaje. La cobertura y continuidad de la internet son factores esenciales para la transmisión efectiva del aprendizaje. Finalmente, se identifica que la limitada habilidad de los profesores en el uso de las tecnologías dificulta el desarrollo efectivo de las clases. Este estudio tiene implicaciones para el área de la educación de los profesores. Se sugiere entonces la necesidad de desarrollar talleres para el desarrollo profesional del docente en línea.

Dedicatoria

A mi madre, a mi padre, hermanos, sobrinos, y a todos mis amigos que desde la distancia me han dado todo el apoyo para seguir construyendo mi futuro profesional, pues estar lejos de casa no es fácil.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Introduction

The present study aims at providing evidence about the experiences of three Colombian and three Mexican English as foreign language (EFL) teachers teaching online during the pandemic of Covid-19. The intention is to inform about their perceptions towards the change of modality and the teaching decisions made in the implementation of the online instruction.

This introductory chapter provides an overview of the project and the description of the instructional changes adopted by teachers to respond to the pandemic. Then, a review of the background and the context are examined. After this, the gap found in the literature is discussed as well as how this project intends to bridge it. The purpose of the study, the contributions, and finally, the organization of the thesis are presented to conclude the chapter.

1.2. Description of the phenomenon

The unexpected situation caused by the Covid-19 health crisis impacted education worldwide in 2020. Schools were forced to close, and students had to learn remotely. This phenomenon, unique to our decade, required teachers to adapt their practice to respond to the challenges of the online instruction. About the obstacles found in education during the pandemic, The UNICEF (2021) reported that students and teachers had restricted access to online learning platforms, limited digital literacy to use online environments and resources, and reduced offline response to those students from vulnerable areas without access to internet. Based on this panorama, teachers had to make decisions to manage the online methodology during the contingency and to, at least, mitigate the negative effects on their students' educational trajectories. Those decisions are related to the means teachers used to deliver the content of the class and the support and the facilitation of the content during the instruction. They include content delivery strategies, class procedures adaption, students' engagement, and teachers' technical support.

The teachers' experiences implementing the online instruction became a relevant research topic for me for two reasons. Concerning the first, this event has been a never-seen challenge for education I wanted to explore from the teachers' view. This would provide me a clearer understanding of the pandemic's impact in education not only in Colombia but also

in Mexico. As for the second, from an instructional stance, the decision teachers made to manage their classes and fulfill their institutions goals considering their limited experience teaching virtually are essential to identify the abilities needed to guide an effective online guidance. Such decisions made by teachers can potentially inform us about the knowledge teachers require to teach remotely. This can be beneficial to help consolidate an improved online teacher profile for distance education.

The teachers' perceptions disclose the challenges of teaching online and the opportunities this means of content delivery offers to help bridging the educational gap in terms of the distance that exists between students, especially for those in remote areas, and their schools. Each decision teachers made provided information regarding the complexities of teaching online. For example, how to deal with the absence of the physical presence or the desired digital abilities to conduct the lessons effectively. Regarding the significance, the study informs us about the challenges of implementing the online modality and the teaching decisions made to respond to the issues that arose during this period. Next section describes the background of the study.

1.3. Background to the study

Information about Covid-19 and its impact on education became relevant and of general interest for educational researchers. Among the issues explored can be studies and reports about the limited preparation of teachers and institutions, or the insufficient infrastructure in some contexts to respond to the sudden change. Hence, research in the area has seen a drastic increase in academic journals. After a general search for online teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic, the common themes found in countries different from Latin America were in relation to the teachers' experiences and perceptions teaching online (Noor et al., 2020; Şener, et al, 2020), obstacles for achieving quality distance education (Lassoued et al., 2020) teachers' readiness to teach online (Gudmundsdottir & Hathaway, 2020), and teachers' affective domains and other teacher competencies (Rapanta et al., 2020). Regarding studies that involved more than two countries, the data consulted correspond to Europe, United States, Turkey, Pakistan, and India. An example of it is a comparative study about the governments' response to Covid-19 pandemic that involved the United States and the United Kingdom, which has been examined by Greenhow et al. (2020). They collected news media publications from both countries for four months. They examined the tensions and

contradictions between schooling, educational policy, and the home learning. The results suggest tensions between the methodology, the rules and the teachers' literacy, parental responsibility and digital inequity.

Concerning research in Latin America about the impact of the pandemic in education, several statistical studies reported on the technology and the educational gap, and recommendations for effective online teaching (CEPAL-UNESCO, 2020; EY Parthenon, 2020; World Bank, 2020). Other studies have centered their attention on comparing the challenges early childhood professionals encountered in several Latin American countries, including the United States (Atiles, et al., 2021), and yet, others have explored the challenges and the opportunities that Chilean EFL teachers from a teacher education program have experienced teaching virtually (Sepulveda-Escobar & Morrison, 2020). Inquiries in relation to the modality shift that involve Colombia and Mexico, which concerns the present research, are still in progress. For instance, Torres (2021) explored the educational gap in both countries and the actions taken by their governments to guarantee students access to education and the required support during the pandemic. First, the author explains concepts of subjectivity, diversity, and interculturality. Second, she examines some of the actions taken by the Colombian and Mexican governments to ensure education and access to technology devices. Third, she discusses high-quality content, interaction, and tasks delivered by teachers to students amid the pandemic. By and large, Torres' (2021) inquiry addresses the two countries as my project; nevertheless, it differs in the focus of the research which refers to the educational gap in Latin America. In contrast, the goal of the present project, rather than presenting documentary research, is to look at Colombian and Mexican EFL teachers' experiences from an empirical perspective as to their perceptions towards the change of modality and their teaching decision-making to continue their classes.

1.4. Identification of the gap

While searching and collecting information for the study, I noticed a population gap to bridge. According to Miles (2017) this gap usually addresses a certain population that has been "not adequately represented or under-researched in the evidence base or prior research" (p. 4). Context in this project is understood as the countries and the cities involved and the institutions where the participants work for. As expressed before, some studies conducted worldwide gathered their data from teachers in different countries but from the same

institution. In the case of Latin America, most of them showed information collected from participants who belong to the same educational institution such as a school, university, or language academy in the same country (Atilas, et al., 2021; Sepulveda-Escobar & Morrison, 2020; Torres, 2021). In this inquiry, the participants are six EFL teachers that are from six different cities in Colombia and Mexico who teach in different institutions. Three Colombian participants teach English at different levels of education included primary, high school, higher education, and language institutions in Dosquebradas, Risaralda; Bucaramanga; Santander; and Bogota D.C. The EFL Mexican teachers taught also at different levels in Xalapa, Veracruz; Celaya, Guanajuato; and Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua. The access to the multiple contexts is relevant because the data obtained from each instance can be contrasted, and thus reducing bias to report reliable information about their perceptions and the teaching decisions made by these teachers. Hence, I consider that this evidence is valuable as it is a sample that, although it cannot represent the whole population, considers a variety of contexts. It provides an idea of what teachers in the same conditions had experienced in varied places of Colombia and Mexico, which could assist to identify improvement actions to take advantage of the online modality. This information is of relevance not only for teachers' online professional development, but also for informing teachers, administrators at institutions, policy makers, government programs about the challenges and the opportunities that the distance instruction entails and the desired abilities for effective education.

In consequence, an empirical investigation of this phenomenon is essential because it provides information about teachers teaching under different circumstances responding to the same challenge emerged from the pandemic, their required abilities to promote an effective learning environment, and the common situations they face when teaching online.

1.5. Purpose of the study

The study intends to provide the view of the six EFL teachers' experiences and the decisions made to continue with their classes online in the context of a pandemic. Two research questions will guide this inquiry:

1. What are the teachers' perceptions regarding teaching online during the Covid-19 pandemic in their contexts?

2. What decisions did they make to manage the issues that arose in their classrooms during this period?

1.6. Contribution of the study

Distance teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic forced teachers to make decisions to manage any situation arose. By describing some of those decisions in the implementation of the online instruction, future online teachers can be informed about the complexities of the mode and the pedagogical abilities to deliver and facilitate the lessons. Moreover, this study discusses several desired skills that teachers should develop to improve the effectiveness of the online lessons considering their limited preparation on the modality. On the other hand, the information portrays the cases of Colombia and Mexico responses to the pandemic of Covid-19 for future researchers. The results would be of relevance for pre-service and in-service teachers, who already deliver their instruction online, and for those who plan to teach online at schools, universities, or language institutions. There are implications for teacher education programs, particularly in the field of online professional development.

1.7. Organization of the thesis

In the first chapter, the introduction, the description of the issue, and its background were presented as well as the gap found in literature and how it would be bridged. Furthermore, the review of the background of the research and the purpose are described. Finally, the contributions to education, especially in the online teaching practice are shown. The second chapter offers an overview of the main concepts concerned with the teachers teaching online which are the impact of the Covid-19 in education, online teaching and face-to-face instruction, teaching decision-making, and the technological pedagogical and content knowledge. The third chapter outlines the methodological framework. The nature of the research is discussed along with the methods, the approaches, the techniques, and the data analysis approach. Additionally, the information about the participants and their contexts is revealed. The fourth chapter presents the analysis of the information collected through the techniques utilized. Finally, the fifth chapter offers the conclusions of the study, contributions, limitations, and suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

This chapter provides the literature concerning the change of modality, online teaching practices and related features such as the information and communication technologies (ICTs) and the digital literacy. The first section includes an overview of aspects related to the shift and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in Latin American education, especially in Colombia and Mexico as well as the decisions made by both governments to support the educational systems, the accessibility to digital devices, and the internet connection and its continuity in both countries. As for online teaching, the second theme establishes a comparison between this modality and face-to-face instruction. The third theme describes concepts of teaching decision making followed by the notion of knowledge focusing on technological pedagogical content knowledge.

2.2. The impact of Covid-19 on education

In 2020 the outbreak of the virus SARS-CoV-2, which causes the disease Covid-19, forced governments worldwide to take measures to mitigate its propagation. Different sectors like business, health, education, and tourism were affected. People around the world started to face a new reality that included social distance and constant hand washing. In terms of education, institutions closed temporarily, partially, or completely, affecting around 1.7 billion students in 192 countries (Mahdy, 2020). Concerning Latin America, at least 144 million students no longer received their classes in-person (UNICEF, 2020), which impacted their educational process. As a response to the school closures, face-to-face instruction migrated to digital environments. Such a solution came along with other challenges concerning the use of the technology by teachers and students, limited online teaching experience, and the restricted accessibility to the ICT devices as well as the reduced internet access that students and teachers experienced during the shift. As a result, governments' mandates in countries like Colombia and Mexico included the implementation of online instruction and the incorporation of resources that had been developed before the pandemic, plus others created during the contingency. The next section presents the governments decisions to implement virtual classes.

2.2.1. Government decisions to implement virtual classes

One of the immediate measures taken by the Colombian and the Mexican governments as a response to the contingency was the implementation of the distance education. This modality is defined as “education and training imparted at a distance through communication media: books, radio, TV, telephone, correspondence, computer or video” (CEDEFOP, 2008, p.60). This implies that the class material could be delivered printed or via telecommunication. Despite the variety of strategies for distance education, the online mode was the most widespread form of teaching. This concept is discussed later in this chapter.

On March 15th 2020, the Colombian government made an announcement informing that face-to-face classes would be suspended and the academic calendar would be reorganized. Thus, students went on vacation from March 30th to April 20th in all the levels of education from primary schools to higher education. Based on the status of the contingency, students would return to face-to-face instruction, or they would continue in an either virtual or distance mode approach (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 2020b). During the final two weeks of March, the government suggested that teachers plan and develop activities for students to work from home. Therefore, the government proposed the protocol of *alternacia escolar*, or school alternation protocol, be implemented by August 2020. The alternation protocol referred to the implementation of activities to be performed by students and teachers at home, in virtual environments and in occasional face-to-face meetings until students resumed classes progressively (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 2020b). Nevertheless, the second period of 2020 was entirely conducted online due to the critical impact of the pandemic in the country’s dynamics. On September 24th, the Colombian government notified the *entidades territoriales* to develop their plan to ensure students a safe and successful return to classes following the alternation protocol. In Colombia, *entidades territoriales* refers to the departments, municipalities, districts, or indigenous communities recognized by the central government as autonomous territories (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, n.d.). Additionally, the government required that territorial entities guarantee essential parameters to adopt the alternation protocol at schools. These included the mandatory use of facemasks, handwashing schedules for students, no food sharing, avoiding touching one’s face, nose, or eyes, two meters of minimal distance between students, and

avoiding the use of gloves. Students who presented any symptoms related to Covid-19 must stay home (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 2020b). Even though schools followed the protocols already mentioned, classes continued online in 2021. They went virtual modality continue during January and February. By March 15th, 2021, face-to-face classes in Colombia restarted under the school alternation protocol (Infobae, 2021).

The Colombian government also implemented strategies to reach students and avoid desertion as informed by the Ministry of Education in Colombia (2020). These strategies included an increase of resources destined to widen the coverage of the school feeding program, so that students could continue receiving their food at home (Decreto 470, 2020). The strategy “Juntos en casa lo lograremos muy bien” provided orientation to parents for children and adolescents caring and self-caring, recommendations for students’ efficient time organization at home, accompanying the development of students’ assigned activities, and socio-emotional support (Ministerio de educación Nacional, 2020b). Regarding the mass media intervention, the regional channels like *TeleCafé*, *TeleAntioquia*, *TeleCaribe*, *TelePacífico*, *TRO*, *TeleIslas* and *Señal Colombia* (Colombia’s national broadcaster) presented a variety of educational content through programs like *Profe en tu casa* and *3,2,1 Edu-acción* (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 2020a). The *Radio Nacional de Colombia*, *Radiónica*, and the local and community radio stations played a fundamental role in reaching those students located far away from the urban areas. The reason is that the radio and the television are the mass media with the highest coverage in the country that can reach remote areas, with 88% and 99% respectively (Federación Colombiana de Periodistas & Reporteros sin Fronteras, n.d.). Accordingly, television and radio were key to ensuring students their right to education.

Mexico had a similar response as Colombia. On the 16th of March 2020, the Mexican government issued an agreement that informed that classes would be suspended from March 23rd to April 11th nationwide (Acuerdo 02/03/20, 2020). However, during his daily press conference on March 16th, the Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador extended the class suspension until May 17th in 900 municipalities while in the rest of the country until June 1st, 2020 (Navarrete, et al, 2020). It is significant to remark that such closures addressed preschool, primary, secondary, and normal education institutions as well as the university linked to the public education ministry. The school year 2020-2021 for basic education

(preschool, primary, and secondary) started by August 24th (Infobae, 2020). For some universities, the classes were resumed by September 21st although, some others restarted before. During the second semester of 2020, classes were mainly conducted through online platforms (Compañ-Garcia, 2020; Forbes, 2020) and other types of distance education modes such as television, radio, or offline learning strategies (CEPAL-UNESCO, 2020) to reach a significant portion of the student-population.

Several state organizations and NGOs provided resources for teachers and students to support their classroom activities; they also provided support material to work at home with their children. To illustrate this, the public education bureau (SEP) promoted the creation of the platform *Aprende en Casa* (Navarrete et al, 2020). The activities consisted of minimal tasks and concepts that emphasized five different areas: logical-mathematical thinking, language and communication, healthy coexistence, civics, and health care. This process was supported by extra reading, television programs, videos, knowledge reinforcement, and others similar activities (Administración Educativa Federal, 2020). Moreover, Pruebat (www.pruebat.org) was provided for the school population (Fundación Carlos Slim, 2020). This free virtual platform contains videos and exercises for different grades in primary and secondary school. It focuses on five different subjects: mathematics, Spanish, biology, physics, and chemistry. They include lessons, classes, videos, games, and extra notes (Navarrete et al., 2020). The Mexican public education bureau also issued an official regulation by which television and radio stations would transmit educational content to contribute to the learning process during the lockdown as Navarrete et al. (2020) expressed:

En dicho boletín se especifica que el canal 11 del Instituto Politécnico Nacional (IPN) transmitiría contenidos de educación preescolar y primaria, Ingenio TV emitiría los contenidos correspondientes a secundaria y bachillerato, el Instituto Latinoamericano de la Comunicación Educativa (ILCE) transmitiría para los niveles de preescolar, primaria y secundaria mediante el Canal Satelital Internacional, mientras que para el sistema radiofónico se adhieren el Sistema Público de Radiodifusión del Estado Mexicano (SPR) y la Red de Radiodifusoras y Televisoras Educativas y Culturales de México (p. 154)

As presented, the aid provided by the government and other organizations, contributed to providing access to a considerable number of students for them to continue with their classes, particularly those in preschool, primary, and secondary school. Even though the diverse strategies focused on core areas such as mathematics, Spanish, chemistry, physics, biology, civics, and health care, only *Aprende en Casa* (www.aprendeencasa.sep.gob.mx) offered support for primary and secondary students' English language learning for thirty minutes a week.

For Compañ-Garcia (2020), carrying out the program *Aprende en Casa* was a challenge because a large number of students neither had access to devices (computer, television), nor did they have a reliable internet connection or television signal. Hence, the program not only had to address a mere educational action, but it needed to be associated to improving different services like the access to technological resources and enhancing the connectivity. For instance, there was a poor television signal as coverage was not available in some regions. Thereby, students did not have access to the television educational content.

In terms of EFL teaching in Mexico, the content delivered in the mass media for the classes presented a section dedicated to the English language only a half an hour daily for elementary school level. In contrast, resources like Pruebat, and *Aprende en Casa* did not provide any English-related content. In Colombia, the content broadcasted by *Señal Colombia*, *Profe en tu casa* and *3, 2, 1 Edu-acción*, were related to core areas, but not to English language. Despite this lack of input, English language learning has been supported by the Ministry of Education of Colombia through the English National Program. The resources include *Way to Go* and *English please* textbooks series, and graded readers for reading practice; in addition to the A1 English level project *Bunny Bonita*, which is composed of videos and pdf guides for children from four to eight years old. It emphasizes grammar, vocabulary, and English pronunciation. The *Colombia Aprende* digital mobile app was comprised of 3000 books available of which 100 are in English while *Talkativ-E*, which is a strategy for teachers and students' English teaching and learning, allowed them to practice their conversational skills. Moreover, the *B1 Challenge* mobile app, which allows students self-directed learning, is a game-based learning resource where students are required to complete different missions. Each mission is a minigame with different questions in English (five to fifteen questions approximately) that students answer to reach the end of the game.

All the resources, included the textbooks in digital format, are available on the *Colombia Aprende* website (www.colombiaaprende.edu.co/). These resources were created and were available before the pandemic through the English National Plan. Although such assets were not created as a response to the contingency, they served as extra material support for teachers to use in their lessons and for students to work autonomously. From this viewpoint, it appears that Colombia was better situated to support English language education in comparison to the efforts made in Mexico.

EFL teachers in private and public institutions managed to continue teaching the classes by their means in both countries, and the support provided by their institutions in Colombia and Mexico. As mentioned previously, the most common methodology used in Latin America was online teaching (CEPAL-UNESCO, 2020) while other strategies were implemented like sending printed guides to students who had limited access to the internet and devices, or the use of mobile phones for communication. In online instruction, EFL teachers, like in other areas, used video conferencing platforms, learning management systems (LMS), and resources available on the web such as videos, audios, worksheets, games to support their students' learning process.

In terms of teacher education, PeaceCorps Colombia TEFL, a volunteer program which aims at teaching English in different communities in the country, in alliance with the Ministry of Education of Colombia facilitated a webinar (Carey & Aguirre, 2020) (<https://fb.watch/468G702yf9/>) conducted by expert EFL teachers who shared their experiences teaching online and the strategies they used to reach their students. One of the main findings was that despite the lack of internet coverage and devices, teachers managed to continue their classes through WhatsApp. This text-messaging platform made it possible for teachers to send assignments, provide explanations, record voice notes for instructions, and connect with students while they used their cellphones to record their assignments. Among the activities they developed include singing pop and rock songs in English, acting out skits, demonstrating recipes, and presenting news reports. WhatsApp proved to be an effective tool to improve students' interest during the pandemic for EFL teachers (Agustin et al., 2020).

The resources supplied by the Colombian government allowed students to continue with their English learning process on their own; however, there is no evidence of the

effectiveness of these resources in students' English language progression. In any case, one of the major challenges faced by EFL teachers was the existing problem of lack of internet coverage and continuity, access to technological devices, and their preparation.

As presented, Colombia and Mexico experienced similar challenges and a comparable response to the health contingency. However, despite all the strategies implemented and the online teaching method used to deliver the classes, a negative impact on students' education was only partially mitigated (Banco Mundial, 2020) and dropouts increased even further (Torres, 2021). In fact, the World Bank (2020) asserts that students depend on the available devices at home and the capacity of parents to provide support to have an improve online learning. Therefore, it is essential that not only governments supply resources and content to support learners during this period of change, but also to have sufficient infrastructure to reach those students who are in remote areas, and to stimulate the faculty of parents to support their children when working at home. It appears that extra efforts and investment were and are still needed to fully assist students' learning process in distance modality. The next section explores the ICTs accessibility and internet availability in Colombia and Mexico.

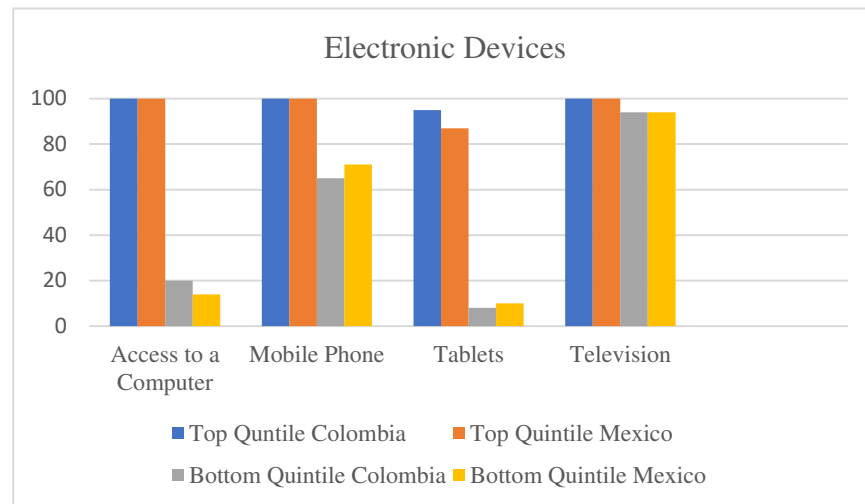
2.2.2. ICT accessibility and internet coverage in Colombia and Mexico

For an online class to happen teachers and students need to have access to basic resources. These include the facilities to teach and study at home, technological devices like a computer or a tablet, and the learning resources to facilitate the learning process. The UNICEF's (2020) states there must be "availability of books and educational materials at home, availability of a place to study, access to electronic devices and connectivity, parental support and involvement in the learning process" (p. 8) of their children, in addition to the access to reliable high-speed internet. UNICEF's report (2020) showed that Latin America and the Caribbean countries "face a strong inequity in the resources that are necessary for creating conditions that are conducive to learning at home" (p. 8). This report revealed an educational gap since students from low socioeconomic status were less likely to attend their classes due to the limited access to electronic devices such as computers, mobile phones, tablets, and televisions at home. That is, the population with the lowest income (bottom quintile) experienced greater difficulties to participate in the classes and to do their homework than those in the highest income backgrounds (top quintile). This negatively

affected a large population of students, and so, it represented one of the major challenges Mexico and Colombia faced. Figure 1 displays the information provided by UNICEF (2020) regarding access to electronic devices in Latin America. For this study, only the information about Colombia and Mexico is considered and the population included are enrolled in pre-primary, primary, and secondary education.

Figure 1

Access to Electronic Devices in Colombia and Mexico



Note: Author’s elaboration based on UNICEF’s 2020 report about technology in Latin-American countries.

The following measures are calculated based on the number of students located in the bottom quintile as it showed a significant variation. UNICEF (2020) reports 10,434,248 students enrolled in Colombia and 33,159,363 in Mexico. Only 20% (n= 2,086,849) of the students had access to a computer in Colombia compared to the 14% (n= 4,642,310) of the students in Mexico. 65% (n= 6,782,261) of the students possessed a mobile phone in Colombia compared to the 71% (23,543,147) of Mexicans students. The tablets are the devices that students had less. Only 8% (n= 834,739) and 10% (n= 3,315,936) had a tablet in Colombia and Mexico respectively. Finally, the television is the appliance that most of the students’ population had access to in both countries, 94%: Colombia (n=9,808,193) and Mexico (n=31,169,801), similar to the Latin America countries’ median (n= 144,949,344); 94% (136,252,383). The evidence indicates that students who belong to the bottom quintile

found challenging to take part in their classes than those in the top quintile. However, more than 60% (n= 6,260,548, in Colombia; n= 19,895,617, in Mexico) of students had a mobile phone in both countries. This reveals the potential of this technology so that developing strategies to use it to provide instruction and practice continuously are required.

Internet access in Mexico according to the *Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía* (INEGI) in the “Encuesta Nacional sobre disponibilidad y uso de tecnologías de la información” 2019, showed that 70.1% (n= 84,1 million) of the internet users are above six years of age, but only 60.6% in average (n= 21,8 million) of homes in the country have a point of internet connection. 96.4% (n=17,377) of university students are connected to the internet in contrast to the 59.1% (n=19,564,024) of the population in basic and secondary education. This can be an evident disparity between the educational levels, or that university students utilized the internet more than students in basic education. In Colombia, the information presented by the *Ministerio de las Tecnologías de la Información y la Comunicación* (2019) revealed that only 43% (21,7 million) had access to the internet out of 50 million Colombians. The highest internet connectivity rate was found in urban areas. The information presented above suggests that about 50% of the student population has access to the internet, especially those students who live in larger cities. The absence of the internet is highly evident in primary and secondary school learners rather than the university ones. It is perceived that despite the internet availability in both countries, it is still needed to increase its coverage to reach larger proportions of Mexican and Colombian populations. Unless this gap is bridged, students will continue facing challenges for their online classes.

Colombian and the Mexican governments made decisions and provided diverse resources for teachers and students to mitigate the impact of the pandemic to the educational process. Notwithstanding the efforts, challenges such as the lack of technological devices available to students, the low internet coverage in places far from the urban areas, and the limited experience of teachers implementing ICT tools remain to be solved. To identify the challenges teachers experienced during the online implementation, it is worth establishing a parallel with the face-to-face instruction.

2.3. Online teaching and face-to-face instruction

In order to have a broader view of the change of modality, it is valuable to define the methodologies that revolve around this study. It is essential to clarify that even though the

term Emergency Remote Teaching has appeared to define the temporary sudden change of modality, in this study, the online teaching term is used instead, as the shift is not only perceived as temporary but as an experience that would allow teachers to strengthen their online instruction abilities. The definition of distance learning has changed throughout the years. An instance is Saykili's (2018) work that describes three generations of distance teaching-learning. The first generation was characterized by print technology or postal service. In the second generation, education was driven mainly by broadcast technologies, like the radio or the television. The third generation is represented by the computer-mediated communication where audio-video conferencing allowed synchronous and asynchronous two-way exchange; something that was not possible during the first and the second generations of remote teaching-learning. Therefore, online teaching is only a part of the distance education mode within the third generation.

Differently, face-to-face instruction corresponds to the communicative act in which the teacher delivers their classes in the same place and time (Romero-Mayoral et al., 2014) limited by the physical setting. It was the most common type of instruction before the contingency caused by the pandemic although online instruction has experienced exponential growth over the past two decades (Gillespie, 2020; Gimeno-Sanz, 2016). Wuensch et al. (2008) state six advantages that face-to-face classes have over online teaching. These include social and spatial awareness as learners can observe the reactions of both other peers and the teacher. The classroom physical arrangement that influences teachers and students' interaction such as the position of students' and teacher's desk, the whiteboard, and other equipment. This view is consistent with what Reisetter et al. (2007) found in their study: students live different experiences due to the influence of the setting they study in. These findings will be discussed later in this section. The social and intellectual interactions with classmates that are perceived as easier, immediate, dynamic, and more efficient. Facial expressions and body language, essential elements for feedback since instructors can identify whether a student pays attention, has doubts or does not understand a concept. Communication which is perceived as faster and more efficient since it permits teachers to channel students' attention to specific class activities while online instruction may delay the communication due to the time and effort invested in writing chats, emails, or other textual information. This is evidenced in asynchronous online teaching-learning. Finally, the

assessment process is perceived as reliable since the teacher controls the testing environment whereas, in online teaching, distance hinders such control. Consequently, face-to-face instruction is believed to be immediate and influenced by factors in the setting where the instruction is delivered and supported by diverse body language cues.

As for online teaching, one of the salient characteristics is the distance between the teacher and the students. Ananga and Biney (2017) indicate that, due to the absence of a physical presence, “there must be a change from [the] learning paradigm so that each student can be successful in this learning environment” (p. 178). This means that the view of online education requires teachers to change their perspective of instruction as both modalities differ. For instance, whereas face-to-face classes tend to be teacher-centered, online mode is likely to be student-centered. Attention is another factor that teachers need to consider as they do not control the environment where their students are. Myriad of distracting elements might emerge around students due to the absence of the physical presence.

Despite the advantages and disadvantages of face-to-face and online instruction, both methodologies lead students to have positive learning outcomes, but the experiences that students have in those environments are different. Reisetter et al. (2007) conducted a study with two introductory courses in research methods, one face-to-face and the other online. Both classes were guided by the same professor and the same materials. The result illustrates that in pre and post quantitative measures, students scored equally in learning outcomes and satisfaction, but revealed that online learning was a different and positive experience compared to face-to-face lessons. In the case of online learning, students attributed the success to the structure of the website, the feedback from and the access to the teacher. In contrast, students in face-to-face instruction ascribed their success to the teacher, the classroom structure, and the interaction with the teacher and their peers. Thus, while in online teaching the content and resources play an essential role, which can promote autonomous learning, in face-to-face instruction the teacher, the classroom structure and the interaction between participants are of significance. This leads students to live different experiences, but it does not necessarily mean that one modality is better than the other. However, the circumstances in which the study was carried out are different from that of Mexican and Colombian EFL learners experienced during the pandemic.

As presented, both instructional forms have advantages and disadvantages. Face-to-face instruction has been the traditional teaching method whereas online teaching has emerged as an alternative to traditional instruction's dependency on set time and place, which has also evolved according to the advances in technology. Therefore, schools opted for the online teaching-learning as the solution to sustain students' educational process. In this sense, teaching decision-making played a fundamental role due to the variety of quick solutions teachers made to implement the online instruction during the pandemic of Covid-19 (Hodges et al., 2020; Usher et al., 2021). The next section discusses the concept of teaching decision making as an essential action in the implementation of the online instruction.

2.4. Teaching decision making

Teachers had to make multiple decisions in order to implement the mode and facilitate the classes during the transition from face-to-face to online instruction. Thus, experience in remote teaching and the digital literacy can influence the quality of them. According to Griffith et al. (2013), teachers make decisions countless times, not only during class time but also before and after it. They decide about their methodology to deliver content, the resources to use in class based on the size of the class, the students' behaviors management, feedback, interaction (Hodges et al., 2020) among other features that influence the teaching-learning process. Thus, making a choice involves teachers' cognitive processes and classroom behaviors. Such processes are about gaining understanding, knowing, thinking, judging, and problem-solving that teachers enact in the class in response to an event. Reflection is fundamental to enhance the decision procedure as well.

Based on Shavelson's (1973) idea that decisions in teaching are either conscious or unconscious, and they are the result of complex cognitive processing of available information. The decisions that teachers make during the interactive phase (reflection in action), tend to be quicker, unconscious, routinized, unplanned, intuitive, skilled-based (short-term decisions) while, in the pre- and post-active phase (reflection on action and for action), teachers make long-term, conscious, planned, rational, knowledge-based decisions (Orgovanyi-Gajdos, 2016). Consequently, teachers can make conscious and unconscious choices to address pre, during and post-class issues.

Teacher decision making originates before and after instruction as well as when incidents happen in the class. Teachers choose from a wide range of possibilities to counteract the issue. Incidents can be something simple like asking a student a question, who appears not to be willing to answer (Bishop, 1976, p. 30); stopping the class because students do not pay attention (classroom management decision making); or even deciding on either moving to the next unit or elaborate on the current one (instructional decision making) (Anderson, 2003,). Accordingly, teachers are constantly on the verge of deciding how to improve their lessons and students' performance.

Making a choice involves factors like time pressure, consistency-pressure, and status-pressure, as Bishop (1976) expressed. Each of these features relates to the limited lapse of time between the incident and the choice, the consistency and fairness of the decisions for students, and the authority status that the teacher has within the class. On the other hand, Anderson (2003) suggests that decisions "can be differentiated based on (a) the focus of the decision (individual student or group), (b) the basis for the decision (classroom behavior, effort, or achievement), and (c) the timing of the decision (immediate or longer-term)" (p. 2). As a result, both views of teachers' decision-making are consistent to assert that the quality of the decision requires experience to address those incidents that arose in the instructional process.

As for the practice of teaching online and the teachers' decision-making, Lepp et al. (2021) conducted a study with 16 Estonian basic school science teachers. The purpose was to describe and explain what influenced the teachers' teaching decisions and how those decisions were reflected during the distance teaching process. This qualitative research concludes that those teachers' decisions were influenced by factors such as the digital tools and the literacy to use them purposefully, short-term goals that entail students' social interaction and motivation, and to keep students' workload affordable. Hence, the decisions teachers make in online environments were associated with the use of technology and students' engagement.

The complexity of the decision that a teacher makes, and its focus (instructional or classroom management) are derived from the experience of teaching online. The role of the teacher as a decision-maker involves not only teaching experience but knowledge. The

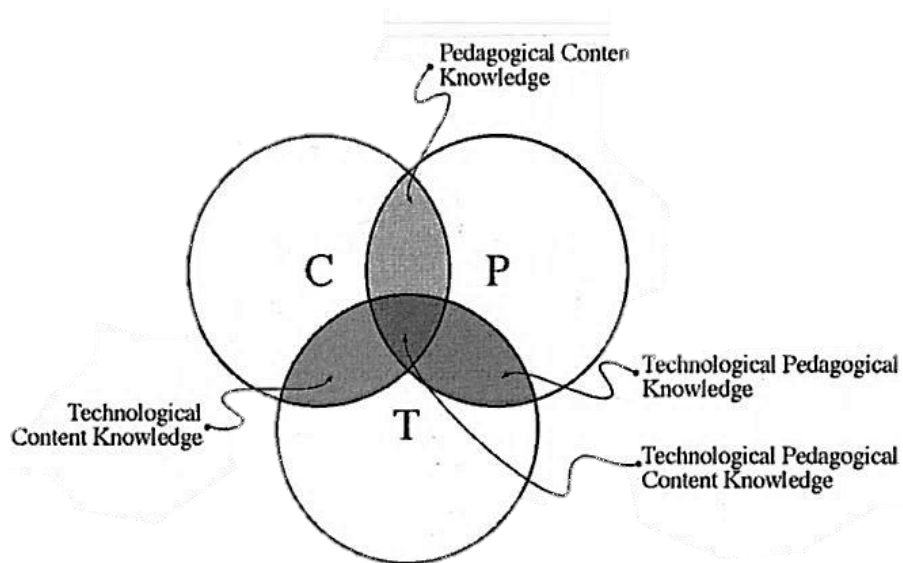
following section describes the preferred ability a teacher should develop to make quality decisions.

2.5. Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge

Most of the decisions teachers made during the implementation of the online mode depended on their ability to use technology and the pedagogical approach attached to the modality. In 2005 Koehler and Mishra introduced the TPACK conceptual framework which integrates the required teachers' knowledge for effective online teaching. It is important to notice that the acronym is TPCK changed for a newer and easier to pronounce, TPACK (Thompson & Mishra, 2007). This acronym describes the three types of knowledge: technology, pedagogy, and content. They represent the "essential building blocks for intelligent technology integration" (Thompson & Mishra, 2007, p. 38), and highlight the idea of taking the three knowledge areas as one rather than isolated. They complement each other and create a "Total PACKage" (Thompson & Mishra, 2007, p. 38) for teachers to know how to use technology applied to education.

Figure 2

Technological pedagogical content knowledge



Note: Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge. Reprinted from "Breaking news: TPCK becomes TPACK!" by Thompson A. & Mishra P. (2007) *Journal of Computing in Teacher Education* 24, 38–39.

As seen in Figure 2, the framework encompasses Shulman's (1987) Pedagogical Content Knowledge view. The content part relates to the subject matter to be learned while the pedagogical refers to the teaching-learning strategies, techniques, and methods that teachers use to deliver such content. The technology involves devices for exchanging information between teachers and students, the internet, networks, multimedia, and related skills to the online educational process. The combination of pedagogy and technology advocates teachers' abilities to manipulate technology to deliver the subject matter.

Roman et al. (2010) reported on the result of a six-week online teaching training program. The study involved forty faculty members who were trained to teach at the university level. The results indicate that more than half of teachers perceived they felt secure teaching online due to the instruction received. Hence, learning about technology has positive implications for online teachers. Similarly, Brinkley-Etzkorn (2018) explored the TPACK model impact through a mixed-method design. The participants were 28 in-campus teachers from a university in the United States. The purpose of the training was to support them to redesign participants' class structure, prepare their online course sites, syllabi, lesson plan, and assessment. The findings suggested that after teachers finish training, they incorporated elements into the design of their syllabi, and their abilities to teach changed and improved. This implies that for effective online instruction, teachers should develop TPACK, which leads teachers to make quality decisions that could support their students learning process. During the implementation of the online modality, teachers showed a progressive gaining in digital proficiency that allow them to explore other web resource and include them in their lessons.

2.6. Conclusion

In conclusion, Colombia and Mexico adopted similar strategies to face the impact of the pandemic in education. Schools adopted the online modality and other distance teaching-learning strategies while other institutions provided resources to supplement students learning. Despite the adopted strategies, a considerable number of students could take part in the classes due to the absence of a technological devise and/ or limited internet connection. This challenged the implementation of the mode. Considering the online approach, this modality offers a great variety of resources and platform that can help sustain students learning. However, the limited experience with technology for teaching-learning and the still-

to-develop digital literacy restricted teachers to make teaching quality decisions and students to struggle using technology.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This chapter explains the methodological considerations of the study. In the first part, the research questions are revisited. Then, the descriptions of the research paradigm and the research approach are provided followed by an explanation of the data collection procedure and the data analysis techniques. After that, the context and the participants' information are introduced. Finally, the piloting conducted before the study and the ethics in the data collection process are presented.

3.2. Research questions

As previously mentioned, the present study examines the experiences of six EFL teachers' teaching online during the context of the pandemic caused by the Covid-19. The following questions are to be answered:

1. What are the teachers' perceptions regarding teaching online during the Covid-19 pandemic in their contexts?
2. What decisions did they make to manage the issues that arose in their classrooms during this period?

For this project, perceptions are understood as the experiences teachers had implementing and mediating classes with technology. The following sections describe the paradigm and the approach adopted in this inquiry. They served as the framework to collect and analyze the information from the six EFL teachers.

3.3. Qualitative paradigm

The study follows the qualitative paradigm. It was adopted because of its usefulness when dealing with people's experiences. Qualitative research, according to Dörnyei (2008), is "concerned with subjective opinions, experiences and feelings of individuals" (p. 38), and its goal is to "explore the participants' view of the situation being studied" (ibid). In a similar vein, Taylor et al. (2016) state that "qualitative researchers are concerned with the meaning people attach to things in their lives" (p. 7). That is to say, this type of research not only explores the perceptions of the participants towards the specific situation but also to the

feelings they attach to a particular issue, which may vary depending on the context each individual is involved in. This paradigm is suitable for this study as it provides a framework to explore the participants' subjective views concerning the change of modality from face-to-face to online teaching. Participants can express their opinions, experiences, feelings, and beliefs which shape their perceptions. Another characteristic of qualitative research is that it “produces descriptive data—people’s own written or spoken words” (Taylor et. al, 2016, p. 7) which are the main sources of information for this study.

One advantage of adopting a qualitative paradigm is pointed out by Mack et al. (2005), who contend that qualitative research “seeks to understand a given research problem or topic from the perspectives of the local population it involves” (Mack et al., 2005, p. 1). In other words, qualitative studies serve as a means to understand peoples’ views based on their specific context. This allows the collection of rich information to analyze, not only from a sole view but from the various teachers’ perspectives. Each teacher experience represents a single perception comprised of opinions and feelings caused by the phenomenon.

This project involves participants from two Spanish-speaking countries who also live in different cities. Each participant guides their lessons under different circumstances that influence their perceptions about the online mode implementation. These include the place where they teach, the students, the English level they teach, and the socioeconomic status of the population taught. This variation differs from one participant to another, which adds relevance to the analysis of the information due to the diverse factors. Thus, a broader view of the phenomenon can be taken. Upon the reasons already presented, the qualitative paradigm suits well for this study. The next section presents the selected approach for the development of this research.

3.4. Case study

All the participants in this study come from different cities in Colombia and Mexico, which represents a rich sample for a case study. In Gall et al.’s (2003) words, case studies need to fulfill four characteristics: “the study of the phenomena by focusing on specific instances [...]; an in-depth study of each case; the study of a phenomenon in its natural context; and the study of the emic perspective of case study participants” (p. 456). Each participant is an instance that provides their personal experiences concerning the change of modality and its implementation in their particular background. Therefore, the data were not

only from the participants' insider perspectives, but also from an intercultural view as they belong to different cities that differ in terms of economic and cultural conditions. This adds value to their voices. Along the same line, Duff's (2008) view is consistent with Gall et al. (2003) perspective as she states that "the same phenomenon or event may be viewed from different perspectives or interpreted and explained differently by the research participant, researcher, or another observer (relative, teacher, tester, employer)" (p. 29). Therefore, although the participants are English teachers, they are different observers of the phenomenon due to the context in which they teach.

Another valuable characteristic of case study research is sustained by Yin (2014). The author expresses that "a case study investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the 'case') in its real-world context" (p. 2). In this respect, the unexpected change from face-to-face to online teaching caused by the pandemic of Covid-19 generated a series of effects on the English teachers' classes which differ based on their backgrounds. Such particularities comprise "a set of individual case study" (Robson, 2002, p. 181) which portray a richer view of the case of the six English teachers teaching online in Colombia and Mexico.

The bounded system of the case study is also vital. Yin (2014) contends that "the persons to be included within the group (the immediate topic of the case study) must be distinguished from those who are outside of it (the context for the case study)" (p. 34). As he mentioned, bounding the unit of analysis helps differentiate the case from others. In this study, the bounded unit of analysis are English teachers who teach at different levels and at different education institutions: schools, universities, and language institutions. They have groups of students that are enrolled in those institutions previously mentioned. This study does not include those who teach English remotely to a few numbers of students in private or one-to-one lessons.

In regards of the appropriateness of the selected method, Duff (2008) affirms that a case study is appropriate when "studying extreme cases, either unique or typical cases, longitudinal cases, or pilot cases in a planned multiple-case study" (p. 112). The pandemic of Covid-19 was a unique phenomenon, at least to our recent decades, that the people did not anticipate. At the educational level, teachers commonly agreed that the shift was something exceptional that had brought not only challenges but also positive changes in terms of the adaptation to the new teaching reality. And even after more than a year facing the challenge,

educational systems in different Latin-American countries are still far from fulfilling such contemporary demands.

3.5. Descriptive case study

This case is based on a descriptive approach. According to Yin (2003) descriptive studies provide rich information of the phenomenon of inquiry. This project provides a description of the decisions that governments from Mexico and Colombia made to manage the changes of the educational process. Additionally, it describes the teachers' perception towards the sudden instructional mode shift and their decisions made to sustain students' educational process. This allows to explore and identify the different intricacies that the teaching-learning process entails (Nassaji, 2015). The information obtained from the six participants is presented holistically to describe the relationship between the sudden change of modality, the implementation of the remote instruction and the decision teachers made to deliver students the contents of the classes. Therefore, the data presented reports the case as the experiences of a group of teachers due to the similarities they faced such as the challenges on implemented the modality, the limited digital literacy and the absence of the physical presence. These were themes found during the analysis process.

3.6. Data collection techniques

The data for this study was collected through two techniques: semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. Prior of the implementation of the interview, the piloting was carried out. The initial action of the process of gathering data was to choose a suitable technique that would allow me to capture rich information of the EFL teachers' experiences about teaching online amid the pandemic. Two techniques were used in this study, which were conducted virtually: semi-structured interviews and a questionnaire even though the former was the only one piloted.

3.6.1. Semi-structured interviews

The interview is one of the most often used methods in qualitative research (Dörnyei, 2007; Mack, et al., 2005; Patten & Newhart, 2018). An interview is a one-to-one conversation where the interviewer poses questions about a specific topic while the interviewee supplies answers based on their experience. With this natural conversation, the research and participant meet in an environment of trust and confidence in which they freely

speak about their experience based on the questions the researcher posits. Such a one-to-one conversation conducted in an appropriate environment helps obtain rich information for analysis. The fact that the interviews were conducted through Zoom videoconference app due to the constraints caused by the pandemic, it allowed the researcher to contact participants even when they were located away. They can also be in a comfortable place where they can feel confident answering the questions, and the time of the interview can be scheduled at any time. In addition, the interview “elicit[s] a vivid picture of the participant’s perspective” (Mack, et al., 2005, p. 29) and it represents an “ideal technique to know the thoughts of whom integrates human composites from an individual and personal point of view” (Fernandez, 2001, p.15). The interview’s goal was to create a comfortable and safe environment where teachers could express their thoughts, beliefs, and opinions freely. The semi-structured interview out the structured and the unstructured was chosen in this inquiry.

Semi-structured interviews can be placed in the middle of two extremes (rigid-flexible): “although there is a set of pre-prepared guiding questions and prompts, the format is open-ended, and the interviewee is encouraged to elaborate on the issues raised in an exploratory manner” (Dörneyi, 2008, p. 136). Such interviews allow researchers to have a preset question guide to drive the conversation; however, if the interviewee is interested in deepening on a specific topic, they can stop and elaborate on it. The questions limit the interview to the researcher’s topic of interest but allow interviewees to elaborate on their ideas. This project concerns specifically with concepts of online teaching practice and the ICTs.

The types of questions used for the semi-structured interviews were open-ended questions. For Seidman (2006), open-ended questions explore the territory and allow participants to take their desired direction. It gathers information about the experience and thoughts of a person, and there is no presumption of an answer by the researcher. Seidman (2006) recognizes three types of open-ended questions for interviews: “grand-tour” and “mini-tour” questions (Spradley, 1979, p. 86), and subjective experience questions. Grand-tour questions require the participant “to reconstruct a significant segment of an experience” (Seidman, 2006, p. 85), for example, a regular day in class. In contrast, there are also mini-tour questions where interviewees provide details of a significant or particular experience. That is to say, the participants may answer a question by illustrating a specific situation of

the lived experience which can be general, or specific. An instance is a teacher who tells a story about a time they call their students to focus their attention on an activity. Subjective experience questions “focus on the experience of the participant” (Seidman, 2006, p. 85). In this case, participants answer the questions based on their lived experience, which means that the three types of questions were included in the interview.

3.6.2. Semi-structured interview piloting

Before carrying out the interviews, the piloting was conducted. In Robson and McCartan’ (2016) words, pilot studies are “a small-scale version of the real thing; a try-out of what [researchers] propose so that its feasibility can be checked” (p. 156). Piloting is useful because it allows researchers to identify whether the questions are appropriate, or extra information is needed. It also examines the feasibility of the research design and timing. Kim (2010) refers to this process as:

The final critical function of the pilot exercise relates to identifying specific methodological and epistemological issues so that researchers can affirm, sharpen, or revise how to pursue and achieve their goals in their proposed studies. (p.193)

Piloting helps shape and enhance techniques, such as interviews, prior its implementation. This pre-study led me to improve some questions and to focus on specific elements that revolve around the change of modality and its implementation. To test the feasibility of the interview, a teacher who teaches Spanish as a first language in a private school in Colombia was asked to participate in the pilot interview. This teacher has similar characteristics as the actual participants, the only difference was the subject taught. The purpose of the piloting was to check whether the questions were reliable to its purpose: to obtain rich data about the topic under study. The piloting was carried out through the Zoom platform to replicate the same conditions the actual interviews were conducted: through the Zoom platform. After the piloting, some questions were reformulated to avoid any confusion on the part of the interviewees so that they could provide the required information, some questions were merged with others, and some others were eliminated due to redundancy with other questions.

After conducted the pilot study, the interviews with the participants were conducted in July and August 2020. The interviews were held virtually with all the participants. Each

session with each participant lasted 56 minutes on average. In total, 339 minutes of recorded data was obtained.

Participants were asked to provide their consent (Appendix C) before the interview started. The design of the interview consisted of ten questions (Appendix A) divided into three core topics: online teaching practice and the ICTs. These topics appeared in an earlier stage of the study when some colleagues expressed their concerns towards teaching online. The interview started by asking teacher if they desired to answer it in English or Spanish. Then, teachers provided their opinions and continued elaborating on their ideas while the interviewer guided them to the topics of interest. The conversation followed until question ten. Even though the interview was designed in English, teachers were free to decide whether they answered it in Spanish. At the end of the interview, teachers were asked whether they could be contacted later for information about their classes in case it was needed. During the process of revising the transcriptions, some missing information was discovered about their classes: workload, number of students, planning time, among other related. Therefore, questionnaires were sent after the interview. This is discussed in the next section

3.6.3. Questionnaire

The purpose of the questionnaire was to identify and understand the context where the teachers teach their lesson and their classes background (hours taught, planning, and assessment hours). In a few words, a questionnaire “is a set of standardized questions, often called items, which follow a fixed scheme to collect individual data about one or more specific topics” (Lavrakas, 2008, p. 693). That is, the same questions and number of questions are asked to the participants. Closed-ended questions were used in this technique. Reja et al. (2003) state that such questions “limit the respondent to the set of alternatives being offered” (p. 161) although they are more likely to be biased. The information needed was specific so that this type of question was suitable for questionnaires.

According to Lavrakas (2008), questionnaires are made of three parts: the introduction (or cover letter), the instructions, and the body (questions). Normally, the questionnaires finish with a phrase of thanks for the participants’ collaboration. The format of the questionnaire was a list of fifteen questions which were prepared beforehand on a Google form template (Appendix B). Here, the participants of this study answered the questions in both ways, in their own words and from a set of responses (Rugg & Petre, 2007).

The questionnaire was developed to be answered in five minutes approximately. The information was requested close to the date of the interview; thus, the six participants answered the questionnaire soon after it was sent. Although the questionnaires were sent after the interview, this did not affect the data processing, and instead, it supplemented the information collected in the interviews.

3.7. Context

The general context in this study portrays the experience of six EFL teachers implementing the online modality during the pandemic of Covid-19. The participants' experiences come from different cities in Colombia and Mexico. Each particular context of the six participants possesses their own complexities that may have challenged teachers differently in terms the access to the technology, internet connectivity and the digital ability to facilitate classes remotely. Each participant lives in different cities from Mexico and Colombia, which differ in economic incomes. Additionally, they also teach in different educational institutions such as primary or secondary school, university, and/ or language academies that belong to the public and private sector. As seen, the participants' contexts differ in terms of location, the countries and the cities; the institution they work for and the educational levels.

The group consists of a six EFL teachers who shared their experiences teaching online. They were invited to take part in the interview through post on English teachers' Facebook groups, colleagues from institutions where the author had worked for, and colleagues from the authors' colleagues. The participants replied to invitation showing their interest to participate. For this reason, the participants belonged to different context which enriched the information collected and validated the data presented in chapter 4. They teach in public and/or private schools and universities where English is a mandatory subject. Those participants who teach in public schools were more likely to experience challenges concerning the lack of technological devices access and internet connectivity in contrast to those who teach in private institutions. The participants invited to engage the study are English teachers from different institutions I worked for, colleagues' acquaintances, and teachers' who belong to EFL teaching groups on social media platforms.

This rich information collected from these multiple participants help validating the data reported due the similarities found. It is important to highlight that the initial method of

this study was multiple case; however, due to the similarities, it was decided to adopt a single case bounded by the characteristics of the English teachers: the experience of the change of modality, being adjunct to an institution of formal education, and the location in one of the countries, Colombia or Mexico. Moreover, even though the participants guided the classes under different circumstances, they coincided on the themes that are reported in chapter 4.

Exploring and issue of this type under different circumstances can inform interested people in Colombia and Mexico and on the distance teaching-learning about the complexities of implementing the online modality and the pedagogical decisions made to manage the challenges arose. Furthermore, it shows the similar challenges that Colombia and Mexico needs to overcome in order to strengthen the online modality for teaching and learning a language.

3.8. Participants

As mentioned, this study collects the experiences of six participants from Colombia and Mexico. Table 1 displays the information of the teachers' profiles taken for the questionnaires: their years of experience, the type of institution they teach, the city, and the course.

Table 1

Participants' Information

| | Name | Teaching Experience | Teaching Context | City | Grade/ Course/ Semester | Type of Institution |
|----------|--------|---------------------|----------------------------------|--------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| MEXICO | Ana | 1.5 years | University | CD Juárez | Intermediate | Public |
| | Olivia | 11 years | High school | Celaya | Beginner | Public |
| | Carlos | 9 years | University | Xalapa | Beginner-Intermediate | Public and Private |
| COLOMBIA | Sergio | 13 years | High school | Bogotá, DC | Beginner-Intermediate | Private |
| | Jaime | 8 years | University/ Language Institution | Bucaramanga | Beginner-Intermediate | Public and Private |
| | Lina | 9 years | High school | Dosquebradas | Beginner | Public |

The varied backgrounds of the participants represent rich data to analyze. Each teacher has different experiences teaching face-to-face classes so that they might have a

different view of teaching online due to the context. For instance, some of them may have faced events or challenges that the others did not. Therefore, the variety of teachers' perspectives regarding the phenomenon enriches the analysis of the data and provides a wider idea from different viewpoints.

3.9. Data analysis

There are diverse ways researchers can undertake the analysis of raw information. Thematic analysis is one of them. Braun and Clarke (2006) express that it “is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (p. 79). This technique offers the choice for selecting recurrent ideas from the data set and find conventions among the participants responses to form a theme. This “captures something important about the data in relation to the research question” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 82). In this case, teachers' experiences, and the teaching decisions they made are the topics of the research questions. The prevalence of the theme can be analyzed in different ways. It can be that most of the participants coincide on the same topic or its “keyness” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 82) as there may be a valuable contribution to report.

Following the phases of thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2016), the first step to follow was to be familiar with the data to clearly identify the participants' position. The interview recordings were transcribed by using the TEMI online application (<https://www.temi.com/>). Additional revision was carried out to ensure the reliability of the participant's verbatim transcription. Then, the scripts were placed in the application MAXQDA (<https://es.maxqda.com/>) to identify the themes, either patterns in the interviewees' responses or any underlying contribution of interest. Such patterns were arranged within broader categories for analysis. Initial codes were generated for posterior collation of the broader potential themes. After that, the themes were revised then defined and named. Three emergent themes were identified after revisiting the data several times: online teaching, teaching presence, and ICTs.

Codes were assigned to the participants when the information was already classified as displayed on Table 3. An example is provided in Table 2 to understand the meaning of the code. The letter *x* means the number of the line within the interviews' transcripts. The techniques are identified with letters, I for interview and Q for questionnaire, C for Colombia and M for Mexico, the name of the interviewees and the number of the theme. This number

is a code designated by the MAXQDA application for locating the information. The excerpts in chapter 4 are presented in the language participants answered the interview, Spanish or English.

Table 2

Example of the code

| Technique | Country | Name | Code | Theme |
|-----------|---------|-------|------|---|
| I | C | Jaime | 8 | From my point of view, it [teaching] has changed a lot, both regarding how teacher do things and how students do things. [...] we [the teachers] weren't prepared for this. I mean, we knew how to use the tools and we knew how to prepare our students for some virtual classes, but not entirely virtual. (IC-Jaime-8) |

Table 3

Coding

| Technique | Country | Name | Code |
|-----------|---------|--------|-------------|
| I | M | Ana | IM-Ana-x |
| I | M | Olivia | IM-Olivia-x |
| I | M | Carlos | IM-Carlos-x |
| I | C | Sergio | IC-Sergio-x |
| I | C | Jaime | IC-Jaime-x |
| I | C | Lina | IC-Lina-x |

The information from the questionnaires was used as a supplement to help the researcher understand the experiences of the teacher; however, this information is not explicitly showed in the analysis. Some of this information is merged with the interview's data and some other presented in the context and participants background (Sections 3.7 and 3.8.). For example, the number of years teaching the language, the type of institutions they teach in, the hours of face-to-face and remote classes. Next section discusses the ethics.

3.10. Ethics

To maintain anonymity, the participants were notified that the information would be kept on the researcher's computer, and it would be used for this project specifically. No personal or institutional information was disclosed. At the beginning of the interview, I presented the scope of the interview and the study. Each participant agreed to be recorded. They were asked whether they had any questions regarding the procedure, and finally, they agreed verbally to participate. Along with this, a written consent form was sent out by e-mail (Appendix C). The letter was written in English and in an easy-to-understand language accessible for the participants. The relevant points were highlighted for them to have a clear view of the purpose of the research. No signature was asked to prevent the use of personal information by third parties. The agreement was made verbally in the beginning.

3.11. Conclusion

This chapter described the methodology used for this study. The research questions, the paradigm and the research approach were presented as well as the data collection techniques that included semi-structure interviews and questionnaires. Moreover, the ethics of the study was presented. In the last section, the context and the participants along with the data analysis technique and coding were described. Each section shows a part of the backbone of the project to reach the goal of describing teachers experience while teaching online due to the health contingency.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis

4.1. Introduction

This chapter reports the data analysis with respect to the research questions posed in Chapter 3. Such information will be displayed in excerpts taken from the semi-structured interviews. The themes found in the analysis are the online teaching practice amid the Covid-19, that include the teaching challenges migrating from face-to-face to online teaching, teachers' feelings towards the modality, and the synchronous and asynchronous approaches. The next theme discusses the social and the physical presence in the online mode, which comprises the lack of face-to-face contact and students' engagement. Finally, the ICTs connectivity and skills entail the internet connectivity and coverage as well as the teachers' digital literacy. Each excerpt is presented in the language the participants responded the interview. This is followed by a discussion on the issues identified.

4.2. Online teaching practice amid Covid-19

Online teaching is characterized by the students' and teacher's physical separation, interactive telecommunications, digital means, and it is institutionally based (Simonson et al, 2012). Digital resources include devices, either hand-held or desk-based, that supports the applications for students attend the classes, materials that facilitate the information uptake, and the internet connection. These are fundamental assets to deliver and facilitate the content and to foster interaction among participants in a class. This section reveals the six EFL teachers' perceptions regarding their experiences teaching online.

4.2.1. Teaching challenges: Migrating to online teaching

Changing from face-to-face to online teaching impacted the way teachers taught English worldwide. In this case study, the six teachers referred to the challenges perceived while implementing the remote modality. The following excerpt shows Lina's view towards the perceived challenges:

Pues yo creo que de todo sale algo positivo y negativo. Voy a empezar por lo negativo porque en realidad si pone en desventaja a los estudiantes. Y es que, por tratarse de una institución pública, pues, la población que accede a [estas], generalmente es

pobre. Estratificados en estratos cero, uno, y dos [...] ellos no tienen acceso a las herramientas tecnológicas necesarias. (IC-Lina-21)

Lina acknowledged that the fact her students came generally from low economic backgrounds was a disadvantage due to the insufficient access to technological resources: a cellphone, a tablet or a computer, and the internet connection. This had an immediate impact on both learners and teachers. The fact that learners could not attend the classes delayed their learning because the content they received was limited, nor did they receive feedback on the performance, so that it was difficult to measure students' achievement. This panorama represents the inequality that exists in education as some students can attend the lessons while some others cannot. As for the teachers, this concern required them to devise strategies to deliver the content to those students who could not take part in the online classes, which increased the demands of time and workload they dedicated to the lessons. Lina's view also suggests that public schools tend to experience more challenges when compared to private schools. It is an indicator that students from state schools were highly impacted by the shift of modality. However, the lack of or limited access to technological resources and the internet were not the only aspects that concerned teachers. Teaching online experience also played a fundamental role. Jaime focused on his experience and his skills to teach online; he expressed that:

From my point of view, it [teaching] has changed a lot, both regarding how teachers do things and how students do things. [...] we [the teachers] weren't prepared for this. I mean, we knew how to use the tools and we knew how to prepare our students for some virtual classes, but not entirely virtual. (IC-Jaime-8)

Jaime believed that the limited preparation for online teaching hindered his instructional capabilities. This is because he perceived he was not enough prepared to conduct a complete course online. In the interview, he expressed he had taught online classes occasionally; however, he felt he was unable to conduct a completely online course. This feeling may be driven by the fact that he did not have extensive previous online teaching experience, so that his digital abilities were still limited by the time of the interview. For example, he might be aware that the paradigm of teaching online is different from that of the in-person classes, yet he struggled to deal with such changes of paradigm. Pedagogical

reflection may help him overcome the change to better approach the affordances of ICTs resources. The absence of extensive experience probably affected his confidence to teach online; thus, his interest. Jaime also underlined that he was not the only one who experienced similar feelings, but his colleagues and his students as well. This reveals that in his specific context, teachers perceived a similar impact regarding the shift. Like Jaime, Carlos felt that he was not prepared for the change either, as he said that:

Mira, pues, de entrada, yo creo que como a todos, nos agarra en curva. Algunas universidades, enfocándose en el nivel superior, no estábamos preparados como para enfrentar al cien por ciento una emergencia sanitaria. (IM-Carlos-56)

Carlos considered that some universities and their stakeholders were not ready to manage the health contingency. He perceived a lack of institutional preparation because it was the first time that people and schools had faced a sudden shift of the modality due to a pandemic. He also pointed out that universities were not a hundred percent ready to face the shift, which can be implied that teachers had some previous preparation to conduct online classes, but this appears not to be enough. This had an impact on the quality of education. Therefore, it can be deduced that the universities he was acquainted with responded to the crisis to some degree that allowed students to continue receiving their classes. He commented that:

En la [universidad] comencé con un grupo de treinta alumnos, cinco de ellos se dieron de baja porque no pudieron soportar tanto la parte tecnológica, problemas de conectividad, no tenían a lo mejor el internet. (IM-Carlos-62)

Carlos mentioned that the lack of technological resources and internet access were obstacles for some of his students to continue taking part of the classes, which led to dropouts. This is consistent to the literature available. This suggests that during the pandemic dropouts increased due to the constraint to access the classes (Torres, 2021). Those students did not have access to elementary resources to support their lessons so that the most appealing choice was to quit their educational process. This is a shred of evidence that reveals that education is still a privilege. It is assumed that only those who can fulfill the basic resources to take

part in their classes receive the benefits of education as they can continue with their learning. Ana had a similar view as Carlos as to the shift of modality, she expressed that:

[...] en general siento que esto nos agarró un poco desprevenidos a la mayoría de los docentes en todos los niveles ya que muchos no estábamos acostumbrados a impartir este tipo de clase. (IM-Ana-14)

Ana evidenced a perceived lack of preparation among the teachers she knew as they manifested they were not used to teaching online. Carlos, Ana, and Jaime, therefore, shared a similar feeling in relation to the sense of readiness towards the online mode. They admitted they needed extra online teaching preparation to be comfortable. At this point, it is significant to notice that two out of the three teachers (Carlos and Jaime) had vast English teaching experience in face-to-face instruction (11-13 years respectively) while the other (Ana) had 1.5 years of experience. Nonetheless, the extensive face-to-face teaching experience does not necessarily mean that teachers are ready to deliver the content online and mediate the interaction. Extra training in this area is required. Unlike Ana, Jaime, and Carlos, Sergio expressed that the significant challenge he noticed was related to the socialization with his students. He indicated that:

Everything remains the same [the English teaching approach]. The only difference is that they were at [their] home and I was here; however, in spaces where I needed more interaction, for example, when I have my homeroom teaching, which is personalized, it was more difficult because I couldn't read the body language of my students, well, you know, you can detect a lie, you can engage better if you are face-to-face. (IC-Sergio-9)

For Sergio, the physical distance between him and his students was the most evident consequence of the shift. Although he expressed that his instruction approach remained the same, he might not be aware or was not able to explain the apparent changes in education caused by the pandemic. This contradicts the other participants' perceptions. They affirmed that the teaching-learning process needed to be adapted to respond to the shift. For example, in Jaime's opinion, the change was evident as teachers and students needed to get used to the online-class dynamics, the participation, the use of the platform, the class management, and

other underlying forces that revolve in the mode. There can be two reasons for Sergio's view. On the one hand, even though he had not been aware of the complexities of the shift or that he could not explain the instructional changes that the implementation provoked, he was the one who had experience working in other modalities like flip-classroom, blended and online. The other participants claimed that the lack of preparation was a factor that hampered their instruction. On the other hand, the school where Sergio taught belongs to the high economic income background that experienced no difficulties as to the internet connection and the students' access to technology as he expressed.

Sergio found that on his homeroom teaching the absence of the physical presence challenged him to personally connect with his students. Homeroom teaching is a short administrative class where announcements, personal and social advice are provided to students. Sergio expressed it was different in face-to-face classes. He affirmed that he better engaged with his students in in-person interaction. Hence, when it comes to more private socialization, being face-to-face is preferred to being at the distance because of the difficulty to read the people's body cues. It is complicated, therefore, to interpret students' behaviors.

It seems that Sergio was concerned about the presence in the class rather than the English lessons and his students' access to technological resources. Such behavior can be because of his school high socioeconomic status. Sergio's view contrasts Lina's in a sense that in public schools, teachers tended to express a deeper concern about their students' internet absence and technological devices' unavailability, while in private schools, teachers account for their students' well-being instead. Nevertheless, it does not mean that teachers in the public sector care less about their students' emotions and performance. A possible reason is that the lack of technology access forced teachers to center their attention to finding different strategies to reach their students since it is the primary resource for the classes occur. Olivia, on the other hand, referred to the challenge of using technology for both teachers and students:

No matter if you want it, [teachers and students] have to lose the fear of using [the technologies]. And I think in that specific case, as humans, we could see that we can break these gaps that was using technology for a specific purpose. So, I think that is one of the things that really helped us in general. (IM-Olivia-23)

The previous extract shows that Olivia perceived that her colleagues and her students were fearful about using technologies. She had seen that teachers and students were unwilling to work with certain platforms and applications for communication because they were unaware of their functionalities, or unable to use them. This led both teachers and students not to use certain technologies. It directly influenced teachers' and students' interest to teach and learn online. Olivia recognized that technology was beneficial for the teaching-learning process, and therefore, that they needed to be committed to using and approaching technology. She was optimistic about the change, and she expressed that the challenge was to make teachers and students comfortable by using technology for education. Nonetheless, she did not provide any suggestions of how to generate such interest on behalf of students or teachers, nor it was not explored during the interview.

In general, this section discussed the limited access to technology and internet connectivity, which still represents one of the most underlying challenges by the time the online modality was implemented. Such absence of resources for students can increase the number of dropouts in the institutions. Moreover, the limited digital skills, and the preparation and experience teaching online were factors that affected the quality of the instruction and the teachers' confidence. Although teachers perceived the online mode implementation as challenging in the beginning, it changed progressively as they got used to the modality. In addition, as reported by some interviewees, the absence of the physical presence constrains teachers and students' socialization, and their willingness to work with technology and use it purposefully. The next section confers about teachers' feelings towards teaching online.

4.2.2. Teachers' feelings towards online teaching

Teachers were forced to adapt to the new reality to achieve institutional goals. In this case, teachers had to adjust their face-to-face lessons to online instruction. This might entail a variety of emotions for those teachers who had no previous experience teaching online. The following excerpts present how teachers felt from the beginning of their classes online until the interview day. Most of the affective reactions identified are concerned with the absence of their school members physical presence and school infrastructure. Lina commented that:

Pues en este momento me siento más cómoda, pero extraño el colegio, extraño los marcadores, extraño el tablero, extraño el contacto con la gente, y no te imaginas cuánto. [...] digamos que es una herramienta buena [online teaching-learning]. Si todos tuviéramos acceso a ella, y si tuviéramos la preparación, la disposición. pues sería buena. Pero yo no cambio la educación presencial. (IC-Lina-52)

Lina expressed she was comfortable teaching online. Despite this perceived comfort, she highlighted her desire to return to face-to-face classes. She pointed out that she missed school. The reasons are related to the interaction with other teachers and students as well as other stakeholders like administrative staff and parents. The absence of the physical infrastructure was another factor that evidenced her preference for face-to-face classes. She considered that the remote modality could be beneficial; however, there were some elements for it to work effectively like the access to the technologies, the preparation, and the willingness to teach and learn through this mode. This implies that not only the technological devices and the access to internet are relevant for the online instruction, but the will to teach and take part in the lessons. Jaime had a similar opinion as Lina. The following excerpt shows it:

[...] if you ask me about this moment, I feel good. I guess. Honestly, I really miss face-to-face classes. I don't really like being in front of my computer that long, just talking to a screen. (IC-Jaime-26)

Jaime showed a similar attitude as Lina. Both seem to be comfortable by this time, but Jaime later demonstrated to be doubtful since he added the expression “I guess”. Jaime admits that he missed face-to-face classes and expressed a preference for it over online instruction. It could be noticed that his willingness to teach online was not high because he felt the absence of social contact with students and faculty members. It led him think that he might be better in the classroom rather than teaching remotely. Interestingly, Sergio followed a comparable pattern as Lina and Jaime, although he was confident teaching online by the time of the interview, he missed the socialization with his students. It is noticed that teachers can be comfortable teaching online, but the lack of social contact led them miss the face-to-face lessons.

Not so bad. I mean, I do miss. I do miss annoying and bothering my students. In my teaching practice, specifically English teaching, I'm just concerned about the speaking part, but so far it has worked well. However, in the part where we have to teach a person how to be a person, it's a total failure because I have no information. I don't know if they have become more confident. I don't if they are being bullied online, I don't know if they are becoming more social or not. Those things for me are important. I mean that's the other side [of teaching], not only your core subject but also how you build people. (IC-Sergio-41)

Sergio suggested that he was fine teaching online, but he admitted he missed the face-to-face classes. He indicated that his concern was about human support rather than the teaching itself. This is seen when he expressed that he did not know whether his students had been bullied or had become more confident or social. It seemed that Sergio was a teacher who cared about his students' emotional assets. He also mentioned that he missed school, especially to bother and make his students feel annoyed. For example, teasing them, telling jokes, or being playful with them. Presumably, the relationship Sergio had with his students was strong since the type of relationship he has built with them was rather personal than merely academic. This is one of the components of the hidden curriculum he addressed during the interview. Another interesting element of his opinion is that he agreed that teaching the speaking ability was laborious. Even though Sergio did not express the reasons, it can be noticed that, indeed, his instruction was affected by the change of modality. This is opposite to what he expressed earlier in section 4.2.1 when he assured his concern was mainly related to lack of the physical presence. Ana, on the other hand, expressed she became comfortable by teaching through this modality:

Pero ya agarrándole [to teach online], siento que ya ahorita me siento más cómoda. También siento que ves que los alumnos también ya sé acostumbraron, y no es su única clase en la que están usando esta plataforma, ya saben la dinámica. Entonces, pues como ya sé que ellos están en confianza, yo también ya me siento mejor. (IM-Ana-24)

Ana manifested that she felt comfortable and emphasized that such feelings might be driven by the fact that her students were used to and able to manage the platform for the

classes. Her thought may imply that at the beginning of the process, she was concerned about teaching online, but as time passed, her feelings towards the methodology became positive. This can be confirmed when she said “*pero ya agarrándole*”, a Mexican-Spanish expression that suggests one is getting used to doing something. She inferred that as her students had taken the other classes through the same platform, they gained digital ability and confidence that they transferred to the English class so that she had a positive view of the instruction at the moment of the interview. Teaching online was not a major challenge by this time. Therefore, her feelings and her students’ digital skills were enhanced progressively as they got accustomed to the online educational tools. In her case, the experience of using computer-mediated tools that her students gained in other subjects, not only had positive effects on Ana’s English online instruction but also on her affective domain as she became comfortable. Carlos expressed the following:

Pues no te miento, que me sentí presionado al principio, pero ahora me siento un poco inquieto por esta cuestión de cómo lo voy a hacer ahora para tener un mejor desempeño yo como docente, cómo voy a preparar mejor mis clases y que el alumno las [the content of the lesson] tenga mejor o más asimiladas. (IM-Carlos-81)

Carlos felt pressured in the beginning, and by the time of the interview, he still showed concern about his classes. He expressed that he felt “*inquieto*” as he needed to improve his teaching performance. Carlos’ opinion addressed his instructional preparation as he noticed that teaching online required an increased effort to effectively deliver the lessons. However, after having four months of experience teaching online and having previous experience with mixed methods, he perceived he needed to enhance his performance. He considered that there was still much to do to improve his lessons and for his students to assimilate knowledge. He proposed then that teachers’ preparation is key for innovating his classes, thus his students could have meaningful learning. Olivia showed a more intrinsic motivation when she referred to her feelings towards teaching online as expressed below:

One of the things is that when you are a teacher is because you love your job. I mean, there is no other way you can keep being a teacher for so long. And with all the circumstances that even if without this pandemic, we are living, with the resources that we don't have, because we are in a public school. (IM-Olivia-43)

Olivia affirmed that education had challenges with or without the pandemic. For instance, she explained that there were existing deficiencies in the educational public system, not only poor physical and technological infrastructure, but the absence of the cleaning and surveillance staff. She added that the salaries and benefits teachers received, in most of the cases did not compensate the efforts they invested in planning, facilitating the classes, and assessing students' performance, in addition to the administrative workload they were assigned. She could foresee what she would face with the shift because Olivia acknowledged the problems that state education faces at present. Olivia appeared to have a realistic view towards the classes since she considers it as a significant factor to help teachers continue with the classes no matter the circumstances: either online or face-to-face. Despite this, Olivia maintained her willingness to teach which is in tune with the other participants' perceptions in this study.

To summarize, these quotes reflect three aspects related to teaching that have critical effects on teachers' feelings. The process of adaptation to a new teaching mode was overwhelming, but teachers became comfortable over time as Ana, Lina, Jaime, Sergio expressed. Teacher preparation for online teaching is needed to innovate classes and deliver content/ knowledge effectively as Carlos suggested. It led to developing a sense of comfort and confidence when teaching online. The absence of the physical presence in online teaching perceived by Lina, Jaime, and Sergio affected their feelings due to the difficulty to interact with their students so that they missed being close to them. This can suggest that the social presence was a fundamental aspect to focus on when teaching online. Finally, Olivia was aware of the difficulties public school has, and so, she was able to adapt her teaching for the love of the profession. This positive attitude can contribute to enhancing the teaching practice since teachers' emotions can influence the result of the learning process.

4.2.3. Synchronous and asynchronous online teaching

Teachers constantly make decisions to find effective ways to deliver their lessons. The shift from face-to-face to online instruction limited classes to synchronous (SOT) and asynchronous (AOT) teaching. For Murphy et al. (2011) in SOT, "teachers and students are temporally dependent [...] they must schedule their presence to coincide" (p. 584) no matter the distance while in AOT "the teacher and students are separated in time and space [...] there are no geographic or temporal constraints" (p. 584). The relevance of identifying the

platform used by teachers provide insights about which was the most common SOT or AOT approach, and thus, understanding how teachers managed to continue with their lessons. The following excerpts describe the decisions on platforms and applications the EFL teachers made to sustain their classes.

En este semestre estoy usando en ambos grupos la plataforma que se llama Microsoft Teams, [...] con esta plataforma llevo las clases por videollamada y ahí mismo les publico y les encargo algo; trabajo o alguna actividad ahí mismo se la comunico.
(IM-Ana-17)

Ana used the platform Microsoft Teams for her classes. She indicated that the platform had two purposes: to help guide her classes through videoconference (synchronous lessons), and to assign homework (asynchronous work). It was noticed then that Ana's lessons were primarily synchronous based. This means that most of her classes were scheduled for students to connect to the platform to receive their classes. She also mentioned that on the same platform she posted homework or activities for students to work individually. Thereby, learners could work at their own pace while she provided feedback on their products. It is seen that the resources Ana needed to guide her lessons are provided by the platform. The platform she used seemed to be convenient as she did not find any additional platform to deliver the lessons and to communicate the class announcements. It saves time that can be invested in other activities related to the class. According to her thoughts, it seems that all her students could connect to the synchronous lessons, which was beneficial for the continuance of the lessons. Jaime utilized a similar platform as Ana:

Well, with the university courses we're using Zoom, the university has hired some private rooms [accounts] too, and I love it to be honest. (IC-Jaime-15)

Jaime used Zoom which is usually for synchronous classes. Jaime said "I love it to be honest" referring to the fact that he had full access to the platform. He remarked on this aspect because free accounts in Zoom only allow videoconferences for 40 minutes while the premium version is limitless. Therefore, on the former version, the classes would be cut in the middle of the class, thus it would affect students' engagement in the lesson. The premium version permitted him to guide his classes smoothly without interruptions. Hence, by

avoiding the interruptions inherent with the free version, Jaime focused on the activities during the class rather than being concerned about the time. The platform also offers some useful features such as cloud-recording services, hosts up to 100 participants per session, social media streaming, and recording transcription. It is valuable to notice that the university provided him with a premium account, which costs \$149.90 a year (in 2021). This case is positive since Jaime can save a considerable amount of money to be able to continue with his classes. Sergio's case was similar to Jaime's. He said that:

The school bought the Google suite. So, we have more tools than the rest. The main hub is a website where they can actually take it for studying. There are some classes that are recorded in case they are not able to see them and there are some links that send them to Google classroom. So, Google classroom in this case works as the LMS is basically how they're going to turn in their tasks, and they know when they're going to have certain parts of their assessment. (IC-Sergio-21)

We also have the school platform. [It] has its own elements, it doesn't work for submitting plans, but it works for the assessment and for the [attendance] registry. (IC-Sergio-22)

Sergio received constant support from the school. Evidence of this is that the school provided full access to Google Suite (Google Workspace for Education Plus). This space has different tools for videoconference (Meets), calendar, a word processor (Google Docs), file storage (Google Drive), and space for distributing assignments, delivering, communicating (Google Classroom) students assignments' deadlines, and other class announcements that are included in the free version. The full access to the suite provides teachers larger space to file storage in the cloud and allows them to record the classes, it holds up to 100,000 users with Google domains, extra security, assistance, and premium participation functions. In this sense, Sergio had videoconferences with his students through Meets. When students could not attend the classes, they were able to see the recorded video on Google classroom after Sergio posted it. He also added that the use of Google classroom worked as a Learning Management System (LMS) that is suitable for creating, managing, distributing, and assessing students synchronically. Furthermore, he utilized the LMS, which was provided by the school, for grades and registering student attendance. Consequently, it seems that Sergio

used a variety of resources, both synchronous and asynchronous, to facilitate his students' learning process and to track students' performance and class attendance. Sergio recorded his classes as a strategy for those students who did not attend the classes similarly to Carlos:

Nosotros utilizábamos Meets. Algunas otras cosas en Hangouts, algunas otras en Classroom. Ahora, con esta cuestión de Teams, también se unió Microsoft y que ya lo incluyó la universidad para que el alumno lo tenga totalmente gratis. [La universidad] le dio acceso a sus alumnos que están matriculados para que tengan gratis la paquetería de Office. (IM-Carlos-68)

Carlos indicated he used a variety of online platforms. Hangouts and Google Classroom allowed him to facilitate synchronous and asynchronous communication while Meets only let him work synchronously. This demonstrates that Carlos conducted his lessons by relying on both SOT and AOT by using the Google Workspace free version. Later, Carlos started using Teams which was provided to teachers and students by the university for free. He mentioned that the free granted access to Microsoft suite permitted students to attend the class through a reliable platform and to save and keep documents on the cloud through the Office. Nonetheless, those learners who did not have access to the necessary devices and/ or reliable internet connection were still an issue to face. It seems that Carlos opted for a synchronous approach to deliver the lessons. Facebook live was one of the platforms he used to support those students who could not take part in the class:

[...] ahora con los demás, que pasaba con aquellos que no podían conectarse, [...] qué te parece si hago un grupo de Facebook cerrado donde el mismo Facebook Live. Lo voy a estar grabando con mi celular. (IM-Carlos-70)

Carlos created a closed group where he uploaded the classes he had recorded for those students who could not connect to the synchronous classes because of WIFI issues. In that way, he employed AOT tools like social media, especially Facebook live to support the whole class no matter if they could not attend the lessons. Therefore, it seems that he made decisions on selecting the most appropriate software that could support those students who were not able to connect to the synchronous meetings. It was noticed that Carlos shared a similar method as Sergio; they had synchronous classes with those students who could connect and

attend the classes and support all their students with AOT tools. In the same vein, Olivia supported her students' learning by making similar decisions as did Sergio and Carlos:

What we [her students and her] did last semester was doing it by Classroom. I used to do some PowerPoint, I uploaded, and I gave out the instructions. (IM-Olivia-35)

One of the students asked me, because the resources he has, if I [could] upload the video through Facebook because that was easier for them [...] They cannot see it in the Classroom app, but they can see it on Facebook. [So] the last two partials, I uploaded the video on Facebook. (IM-Olivia-37)

Olivia used the platform Google Classroom to upload the resources like presentations, videos, and activities for students to study on their own. In this regard, it seems that Olivia decided to implement AOT to reach her students. Moreover, by request of one of her students, she started using Facebook to deliver videos for the mid-term exams. This was because some mobile companies offer free access to Facebook although this is limited to some features. Thus, those students who struggled to receive the class content found an alternative to overcome the issue. Lina expressed that she facilitated her classes synchronically, but it was insufficient to reach students who did not have access to the internet as she describe in the following excerpt:

Ya del colegio nos dijeron que debíamos dar clases sincrónicas, pero pues de un salón se conecta, digamos que el quince veinte por ciento. Entonces los que se conectan bien tiene su clase sin falta. Los que no se conectan, los que de pronto no tienen acceso a una red WiFi, o solamente datos. Entonces hay que hacerles llegar de alguna manera la información, sea por imágenes, o sea por guías. Nosotros diseñamos guías también y la dejamos en el colegio. (Lina)

Lina remarked that even though she conducted her classes online, only a few students connected due to the absence of a computer, internet connection, or both. In other words, the lack of ICT devices and internet connectivity impacted negatively students learning due to the barrier that represents for them to participate in the lessons. In this sense, she relied on a different strategy to deliver the content to her students. She implemented another mode of

distance learning which is similar to correspondence courses through the use of guides. Correspondence courses are a type of asynchronous teaching-learning method where students are provided with materials for them to work at their own pace with limited interaction with the teachers. For instance, she designed guides concerning the topics students needed to learn. She delivered these documents to the school so that could students collect and develop them. Once finished with their assignments, students took those guides back to the school for Lina to grade them and to provide feedback on their performance. This demonstrates the context in which Lina taught correspond to a low socioeconomic background. The fact that more than 50% of her students did not connect to the classes due to the lack of internet implies a need for governmental support to invest in education, especially to support the learning process of those students in such low socioeconomic conditions.

4.3. The social and physical presence in online teaching

One of the most salient characteristics of online teaching is that participants can be located at any place and at any time. There is no need for teachers and students to meet in a physical setting to deliver and receive the content or to build a relationship. However, distance creates an absence that impacts students' behaviors as they normally attended face-to-face, thus online learning appeared to be a new approach. Although being physically present does not necessarily mean that the teacher and students are affectively engaged in the class, this factor can affect learners' performance, attention for engagement, and participation, which challenges teachers' instruction.

Part of social presence involves establishing rapport with students. Wright et al. (2015) state that rapport in an online setting is "a close and interactive relationship that is built upon trust, shared control, and engagement in activities that are aimed at advancing the skills, abilities, or knowledge of a clearly defined group, and of its individual members" (p. 38). In online teaching, establishing rapport seems to be crucial to maintain students' engagement, participation, and learning advancement. However, the lack of physical presence seems to impact the rapport teachers create with their students because it is a type of presence with which they were yet not familiar. To support this view, the following section presents teachers' thoughts about it.

4.3.1. The lack of face-to-face contact in the online modality

Some teachers mentioned that the absence of the face-to-face in-person interaction was a factor that concerned them. For instance, some teachers expressed they missed school, the faculty, their students while others expressed their desire to return to face-to-face. In the following excerpts, the teachers expressed their thoughts regarding how the lack of physical presence and socialization influenced the teaching-learning process.

Lo que me ha parecido con más difícil, es tener como ese... cuando uno está en clase presencial, uno tiene el contacto con los estudiantes y de alguna manera uno puede llamar la atención de ellos [...] es muy difícil hacerlo de manera virtual. (IC-Lina-56)

Por ejemplo, un estudiante tiene mucho sueño. Yo creo que no está poniendo atención. Entonces, a veces me paso y apago la luz, y se vuelve muy oscuro. Ellos como que reaccionan. Y así obtengo la atención de todos ellos. (IC-Lina-57)

Lina exemplified her struggle by admitting that the lack of contact with her students was the hardest situation she faced. Unlike online teaching, she expressed that in face-to-face classes she had contact with her students which made it easier to catch their attention as the second quote presents. The lack of students' attention impacted their participation in the class as well as their language learning process because they were not cognitively engaged in the activities. On the other hand, in the situation described, Lina made body movements to call their students' attention, which revealed that the body language cues were essential to sustain students' attention to the class. This suggests that she needed to find other strategies that allowed her to engage her students during the online sessions because the online teaching paradigm differs from the face-to-face one. Her words may also implicitly inform us that it is crucial to create a harmonious learning environment to establish rapport with students, and thus, increase participation during the lessons. Jaime shared a similar perception with Lina as the excerpt below shows:

Because it's [online teaching] not like you can see them face to face. Hey, man. Let's just do this [the activity] [...] they are not [there], I'm like, okay, he's not here. He must be doing anything else, but he's not here. (IC-Jaime-43)

Jaime described a hypothetical event where he would ask one of his students to do a certain task, but they did not respond because they would be likely doing a different activity. He was unsure about what the students were doing because their cameras were off. The students seemed to be present as the platform showed, but Jaime did not know whether his students were disengaged or simply were not physically present in front of this computer. In other words, the fact that students appeared connected to the platform did not mean they were either cognitively or emotionally engaged. This could also be the case when students were physically present in the classroom. Jaime struggled to attract his students' attention for participation, a similar situation that Lina experienced when she tried to call her students'. Hence, learners could easily evade the class as their cameras were off. This situation has effects on the students' learning as well as the dynamic of the class. Ana also agreed with Lina and Jaime as presented in the following extract:

O sea, siento que este es un desafío porque quieres que ellos estén participando y sacándole el mejor provecho, pero tú también sabes que estás haciendo tu trabajo, y ellos a nivel universitario, ya es cuestión de ellos [...] Entonces siento que eso es un poco difícil, cuando sientes que quieres que lo hagan [to participate], pero pues hasta un punto pues no puedes, pues estás a distancia, no puedes como en una clase presencial forzándolos más a que hagan las actividades. (IM-Ana-26)

Ana expressed she was interested in having her student participate in class and that they would learn. However, she mentioned that students should also be responsible for their learning process because she did what she is required to do. She added that in face-to-face lessons she was able to make her students participate in contrast to online teaching. She used the word “force” when she referred to her students' participation. In other words, this leads us to think that rather than motivate her students, Ana demanded participation which could be an affecting factor for her students' low participation. In addition, Ana's view can also implicitly mean that the mere fact of being physically present in a classroom can force students to participate. It appears to be that Ana used the strategies that work for her face-to-face lessons; however, she did not adapt them to teach online. A probable reason may be her limited online teaching experience. Sergio had a different view from Ana, Lina, and Jaime which is worth addressing again:

[...] when I have my homeroom teaching which is really personalized, it was more difficult because I couldn't read the body language of my students that, well, you know, that you can't detect a lie, you know, that you can engage better if you are face to face. (IC-Sergio-9)

Sergio emphasized from his experience as a homeroom teacher that virtual homeroom teaching is demanding due to the difficulties to read his students' body language, so that he was unsure that his students tell the truth. The social contact in his case was relevant as homeroom meetings require more privacy, probably, he and his students discuss personal topics regarding their socialization with their peers and other teachers. Hence, the means through which they communicated made it difficult to establish the same bond as in face-to-face interaction. Teachers and students were not yet accustomed to the remote interaction. Similarly, Olivia expressed that body language detection was a challenge as she explained in the excerpt below:

By teaching [online], it is totally different. The adjustments, talking about communication that you have to do, because normally when you're in the classroom, you say something, and you see the faces of your students, you know if they get it. If they have doubts, or if they need more examples. (IM-Olivia-53)

For Olivia, the absence of physical presence was connected to the strategies she utilized to check comprehension and further students' support. She inferred that in face-to-face classes, by reading students' gestures, she could notice whether they had doubts, needed extra examples, or simply checked their understanding. There was no need that students replied to her request since she was able to observe them. Thus, such a strategy was valuable in those cases where students were not confident enough to ask for an explanation. This challenge was influenced by the fact that some students turned their cameras off which hinders her to see their students' faces so that communication ended up affected. As a result, she needed to devise alternatives for checking student comprehension and preventing them to turn their cameras off to maintain a fluid conversation.

To summarize, teachers agreed that the lack of attention influence students' participation in the class as the main concern. This has two reasons, one is that teachers struggled to catch their students' attention for engagement, and another is that students turn

their cameras off. Teachers did not know whether students were physically absent or completely disengaged from the class. Additionally, the absence of the presence influenced students' behavior as to the difficulties to read body cues and to check comprehension/understanding, and in some cases, their socialization was hampered. Teachers found it challenging to detect students' emotions that make them strive to connect students to the lessons. The following section discusses the decisions teachers made to engage their students in the class.

4.3.2. Students' engagement

Engagement is a multifaceted construct related to the level of involvement a student has in the class. Despite the different definitions of this concept, Fredricks et al. (2004) propose three different components of it: behavioral engagement, emotional engagement, and cognitive engagement. Respectively, the first focuses on students' involvement and participation in different activities in the class as well as attending to it. The second entails students' affective response to their peers, their teachers, and the course. The third involves task-specific thinking. The following excerpt describes Sergio response concerning forms of engagement:

I like the idea of free product because is less boring for me [...] when they engage on their work, you can see them working through Google Docs, you can see when they're connected in the document, and you are here as a teacher. You can see them working in real-time. So, for me, in that case, the part of the validity and reliability of evaluation and assessment is covered. It's not an issue. So, the engagement has been great. (IC-Sergio-46)

Sergio referred to a principle he had in class. The 'free product' idea. It means that the format of the product of an assignment could be either text, a video, or an image. Google Docs, the platform Sergio mentioned, offers a variety of resources for editing text, making presentations, creating projects in Excel sheets, or developing forms. The variety of resources seems to be engaging for students as long as they can select their preferred application to develop and deliver the assigned homework. Sergio also expressed that this type of format assisted him to monitor his students since, by his students sharing the document with him, he could see each of them working on the tasks in real-time. He believes that such monitoring

contributes to the assessment of the content due to its validity and reliability as he had real evidence of his students' performance. He can be objective when assessing students' outcomes.

From Sergio's strategy, it is interpreted that the 'freedom of product principle' engage students in the classes. This bolstered students' language achievement and their performance in the assignments. As students needed to understand the task and decide on the form for delivering the homework, they are cognitively engaged. In other words, students are willing to invest their efforts in working on specific tasks. It can bring positive effects for their learning. Ana also focused her attention on engagement. While Sergio's engagement strategy was about letting his students choose the homework delivery format, Ana provided multimedia sources of information like the videos or images to grab students interest in the lessons, as expressed in the following quote:

Para engancharlos muchas veces les enseño videos, o les enseño imágenes para que sean como discusiones, y [the students] den sus opiniones, y que no sea meramente lo del libro. Incluso el libro es como un 80% de la clase, pero todo lo demás trato de hacerlo un poco así. También por eso les digo, vámonos todos a Facebook, publíquenme esto. Digamos que esas son las cosas que hago para tratar de mantenerlos con la atención. (IM-Ana-50)

Ana expressed that she used videos and images to engage their students in discussions about a particular topic although it was not all the time. She requested her students to perform other activities using platforms like Facebook to vary the tasks. These types of activities only represent 20% of the assignment students were to complete while the other 80% were provided by the textbooks, which means she still based her instruction on the information from the book. Despite the reduced use of multimedia, Ana affirmed that these inputs, which included videos, images, book exercises, completing exercises in another platform, facilitated students' engagement. It is inferred, therefore, that the numerous resources and platforms learners interact with could make them be willing to participate during the classes. By this means, Ana accounts for students' behavioral engagement to attract them to the lessons. That is, she could observe their students participating and investing their efforts during the

activities proposed. Carlos, instead, centered his attention on involving their students in the lessons.

Mira, mi tarea fue en este semestre también el hecho de conocerlos. Si tu conoces muy bien a tus alumnos vas a saber cómo engancharlos [...] Si tu como docente no lo enganchas así de entrada y no conoce sus necesidades. No conoce sus intereses, perdiste. (IM-Carlos-119)

Te platico de un curso que tuve de Negocios Internacionales. Les dije [...] no vamos a aprender gramática. Ustedes van a crear un producto, pero quiero que ese producto sea cien por ciento mexicano. (IM-Carlos-120)

Carlos underlined the importance of engaging students in classes. He expressed that one of his goals was to become acquainted with his students to understand their necessities although he did not mention how he attempted to do so. However, further, in the interview, he provided an example of how he catered for their students' interests as seen in the second excerpt. In this task-based activity, students were required to use the language for a specific outcome which was to develop a Mexican product. This involves the emotional facet of engagement. Students become interested and enthusiastic about developing certain activities which provides value to their language learning. Hence, part of engagement is that teachers identified their students' needs and interests to know how to respond to their demands. Therefore, Ana and Carlos' perceptions revealed that students' necessities and interests are essential for raising enthusiasm for effectively engage them to the class.

These teachers' views suggest that engagement not only involves a single aspect, but a complex set of domains that includes how students behave, feel, and think. The use of diverse tools and resources that address students' preference for input seems to be appropriate to emotionally engage them in online lessons. Moreover, by implementing a freedom-of-product strategy as Sergio mentioned, students make strategic decisions and invest time in developing their assignments. Finally, as Ana described, the diverse input sources attract students' attention, thus they are behavioral engaged. The voices of Sergio, Ana, and Carlos inform us about the decisions teachers made to engage their learners in the online lessons as presented in the excerpts. The next section refers to aspects related to ICTs and the internet.

4.4. ICTs connectivity and skills

ICTs have been of interest during the last decades and have grown exponentially recently. Even the shift from face-to-face to online teaching has boosted the use of devices and resources available for teachers to teach their classes. Fabris (2018) states that ICTs “are those technologies that make it possible to process and transmit data through telematic channels and networks” (p. 7). The following data informs us about ICTs information found in the interviews.

4.4.1. Internet connectivity and coverage

One of the major issues found among the teachers was the lack of coverage and stability of internet connection as well as the supply of the electricity when the classes were synchronous. In the following quote Jaime considered this problem:

I think that the main issue that my students have had is poor [internet] connectivity. I mean, that happens a lot. I mean, some of them have very bad internet and again, maybe it's because they don't have the best [internet] speed or they live real far away in places where the coverage is not that great. (IC-Jaime-56)

Jaime perceived that the poor connectivity students had was the main issue. He mentioned that those issues may be due to students’ low internet connection speeds. This could also suggest that difficulties like the limited economic resources students have to ameliorate the internet speed, the lack of coverage in the area for faster speeds, or intermittent internet coverage affect negatively his students’ educational process. Considering the information presented in section 2.2.2, some students from his groups may belong to half of Colombians who do not have internet access. Jaime stated that another affecting factor was that some students lived far from the urban area, and there the connection is unstable, or the internet coverage is not sufficient. This assumption matches with the first quarterly report of the *Ministerio de las Tecnologías de la Información y la Comunicación* (2020) which revealed that the department of Santander, in Colombia, where Jaime teaches, has 16.5 fixed internet access points for each one hundred inhabitants which are lower in comparison to the context where the other English teachers from Colombia taught. In other words, this department (referring to the states in Colombia) still has a low internet coverage that negatively impacts those students who live in rural areas. It is valuable to notice that the

context in which Jaime teaches belongs to the public sector. A great number of students who attend public schools usually come from low socioeconomic backgrounds (bottom quintile). This reflects the difficulties students had to attend their classes in a similar circumstance like in Lina's case. It is particularly relevant because Sergio had a different experience as presented in the following excerpt:

I decided to unpack another modem that I had. I did a bridge that redistributes all the internet around the house, and I took a wired line connection until the office, so the connection for my classes is always stable [...] so yeah, I haven't experienced any connectivity issue. (IC-Sergio-76)

Sergio explained how he fixed his home's modem to obtain a stable connection for delivering his classes. He affirmed that he experienced no problems with the internet. This demonstrates that a reliable internet and speed connection are crucial for teachers to deliver and mediate their classes without interruption. This is beneficial for maintaining students engaged in the class. Moreover, as the school in which Sergio teaches belongs to a high socioeconomic background, it is perceived that internet connection issues did not represent a significant impact that affected the lessons, apart from the occasional failures that the internet and electricity can cause. Sergio's optimistic experience might bring positive results for their students' performance. When all the resources are available and working well, the classes could continue at ease. Moreover, the multimedia resources used in class may impact positively students learning process since the speed of multimedia loading is less, then the time of the class can be approached better. In Carlos' case, he expressed that:

[Algunos] se conectan esporádicamente, por la misma cuestión de que a lo mejor no tenían en su casa la conexión de Internet, Pero contrataron, por ejemplo, un plan de datos, o contrataron una línea telefónica. (IM-Carlos-166)

Carlos pointed out that his students connected sporadically due to the absence of the internet at home. However, he conceded that those students who experienced the issue hired either a cellphone data plan or a phone line to continue attending their classes. This event suggests that there is a need for investment in internet infrastructure by governments that can ensure people access to the internet, and thus ensure the right to education. This issue may

be connected to the fact that the context where Carlos taught belongs to the public sector, and thus, they are more likely to experience accessibility and connectivity problems that hindered them to continue with their education. Fortunately, in his case, most students were able to access the devices required and a reliable internet connection. A similar experience was evidenced by Ana, she said that:

El mayor factor con el que he estado batallando es la conexión a internet tanto los alumnos como nosotros [...] la conexión a internet, muchas veces no funciona, tenemos que interrumpir la clase porque se fue la luz, o simplemente si el proveedor del servicio de internet no está funcionando, entonces creo que el Internet es un factor muy importante que resaltar. (IM-Ana-27)

Ana expressed that she had faced difficulties with the internet connection and the electricity. Not only the teachers but also the students faced the same situation. She said that the internet connection or the light service eventually went off and on, thus the class was interrupted. Ana highlighted that the instability of the internet and the electricity cuts were relevant considerations that had negative effects in the educational process since, when the internet is down or the light went off, the class was interrupted. It caused those students to disengage from the lessons. Therefore, external factors like the lack of internet coverage and connection, and the electric cuts were detrimental to their classes, so they hindered student learning as Jaime, Carlos, and Ana indicated.

4.4.2. Teachers' digital literacy

In terms of education, technological abilities should be promoted for teachers and students to improve their interaction in class and manage possible challenges that arose during the implementation of the online instruction. In this case, teachers and learners have required a minimum of digital skills to sustain their online educational process. In the following extract, Sergio referred to some of the needed and desired abilities when teaching online.

Troubleshooting has been hard because that means that we need, as teachers, to also know about technology. Because who's the first troubleshooter, well, the student; the second one, the teacher. (IC-Sergio-65)

Troubleshooting is a type of problem-solving method that allows a person who works with technology to solve encountered problems. For example, if the video call software stops working during the class, the teacher needed to know how to fix the issue to continue with the lesson. Sergio remarked that teachers are required to know about troubleshooting since students always rely on them when they have doubts about the usage of a certain technological application. In other words, technical knowledge to fix technology issues is fundamental to ensure the continuity of the class. In this regard, troubleshooting skills result useful for teachers and students when dealing with issues related to academic activities performance, especially in online instruction. The fact that students are technically skillful is found appropriate to support themselves and not only depend on the teacher. Lina also refers to the abilities and the norms students should follow while being online as she expressed in the excerpt below:

Pues mira que se van adaptando. Al principio fue muy loco porque, por ejemplo, enviaban correos, y en el en el asunto del correo, yo les decía que escribieran el nombre y el curso, [the students] en el asunto del correo ponían, profesora, buenas tardes, tengo una pregunta. ¿Cómo se hace el taller número dos? y no mandaban los nombres, y los nombres de los correos, pues nombres que son indescifrables, no sé, nombres de personajes de Anime, de personajes de esta banda BTS. (IC-Lina-108)

Lina affirmed that her students adapted progressively to the classes online. She expressed that at the beginning of the online teaching implementation students did not follow her instructions, especially when they were asked to send an email with their questions or their homework. She illustrated that learners did not write their names and misused the email's subject field. Learners would write their questions and comments on this field rather than using the email textbox. She suggested that some students did not know how to write an email, and so, she underlined that their e-mails addresses were difficult to understand because they were inappropriate for an academic context. Therefore, it is inferred that her students still possessed a lack of knowledge regarding netiquette. This is a set of norms of behavior people should follow on the internet. In this case, it seems that students struggled to use e-mail correctly, but as Lina suggested, the feedback they received during the practice helped them improve. For example, later in the interview, she noticed that her students learned how

to correctly write an email. The idea Lina presented reflects the students' necessity to learn how to use basic communication tools like email and to follow the protocols that already exist. Carlos also described the way his students used technology:

Oye, Saliste muy bien para el Tik Tok, pero no me puedes subir un archivo en PDF.
(IM-Carlos-170)

Carlos referred to a joke he usually tells in class. He referred to the ability of his students to make and upload videos to social media platforms, but the inability of attaching a document to an e-mail. As Carlos commented, learners were likely to prefer using technology for entertainment rather than for educational purposes. In this sense, fostering the use of different tools such as social media could incentive and engage students in the lessons. It is seen, then, that students also needed to learn how to manage the tools available to accomplish tasks and requirements, like in the case where Carlos' students did not know how to attach a PDF to an email. Hence, having technological abilities is not enough when students do not use them purposefully. Although this can be a behavior children and adolescences show regarding their age, it is valuable to notice that Carlos' students are from the university. Therefore, this behavior can be attached to the widespread use of technology for entertainment rather than for educational purposes. Students seem to be skilled enough to use technology, but they struggle to use it for education. A different perception is presented by Olivia who expressed that:

I always have said that the students teach you a lot. So, when I say, you know what? You have to do a video, like in English. And this is the rubric [...] and their works are just amazing, I just know how to do a video WhatsApp or the application that you're using, Zoom, but they do it with subtitles. They do it with music, with emojis. I mean, they're always very creative. (IM-Olivia-66)

Olivia described one activity she had assigned to her students which had positive results. She stated that her students created interesting videos using basic edition software that even she could not make, for example, WhatsApp or Tik-Tok. She suggested that her students were good at working with technology. This perception can be influenced by the fact that her students were born in the technological era, thus students are creative by using

the available technological tools over some digital immigrants. On this point, learners are disposed to manipulate their technological knowledge and adapt it to their learning process as long as it is related to their interests. It seems that students need to be trained and guided to fulfill the requirements of using the technology purposefully.

ICTs connectivity and skills are fundamental for online classes. The internet connection and electricity service are key features for the development of the lessons. Failure in the services is detrimental to the class and students' learning process. When there is no connection, or it takes longer to reconnect to the classes, students immediately disengage. Therefore, in such a case, asynchronous communication may be the answer. Digital literacy plays a vital role for teachers and students to interact with the content through technology. Regarding students, they had experience with technology which has made them develop certain abilities to troubleshoot issues when they are in class. If students do not know how to solve a problem, then the teacher will be the first person that students look for support, thus teachers need to be capable of helping students. Students seem to be good at using technology, but they usually are not interested in developing abilities for educational purposes because of the idle attitude; however, when they are directed, positive results occur.

4.5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter discussed three main themes. The first is related to teachers' online teaching practice perceptions that include teaching challenges, teaching feelings, and synchronous and asynchronous online teaching. Second, the effects of online teaching regarding the teachers' ability to establish rapport with students. The lack of face-to-face in-person interaction influences students' engagement, behavior, socialization and attention. Finally, the information and communication technologies connectivity and skills where the coverage and connectivity, and digital literacy were mentioned. The three topics portray a small picture of the perceptions and the decisions teacher made to continue with the learning process and to accomplish the learning goals.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

5.1. Introduction

This chapter concludes the present study. It includes the most salient aspects EFL teachers experienced during the implementation of the online modality amid the health contingency caused by the Covid-19. Initially, the research questions are revisited, and their answers are further provided. Then, a description of the limitations, the contributions, and the pedagogical implications are explained. Finally, suggestions for further research are given. The following questions guided the development of this study:

1. What are the teachers' perceptions regarding teaching online during the Covid-19 pandemic in their contexts?
2. What decisions did they make to manage the issues that arose in their classrooms during this period?

The following section provides the answers to these questions.

5.2. Teachers' perceptions and decisions made while teaching online

Regarding the first question, teachers' perceptions about implementing the online modality are similar in both contexts of this case study. The teachers agreed upon their lack of preparation to conduct an online class. It was the major impact perceived from the change from face-to-face to online teaching. Such a preparation concerns teachers' digital literacy because of their little or null experience teaching this modality. They expressed that they knew how to manage the devices, to send emails, to create presentations, to download and use conferencing apps, but they felt they needed to improve their digital literacy in aspects related to learning the use and knowing the features of different video conferencing platforms, video edition software, upload and download material from the web, and moderate forums, among other key skills. Such abilities allow teachers to transform the online teaching-learning into a meaningful experience. By being skillful, teachers can access a great range of resources, materials, multimedia on the web, or can learn and use all the features that the Zoom platform offers to make students experience interactive class activities.

Students were also affected by the shift of the modality in terms of technology access and their willingness to learn online as expressed by teachers. To illustrate this, external

factors such as the absence of a computer or the lack of money hindered students to take part in their classes which delay their learning process. In contrast, to some internal factors like the lack of interest, the unwillingness to learn online or the limited digital literacy students possess to use the technology for educational purposes.

All the teachers in the study had similar thoughts regarding their feelings towards teaching online. Teachers mentioned they missed their face-to-face classes and their students. They showed concern about the online mode because of the manner of communication; talking to and seeing their students on the screen. Although the teachers became comfortable teaching online, Sergio, Lina, and Jaime expressed they would rather have face-to-face classes instead. It appears that physical presence and socialization are essential for teachers because they represent an organic human interaction between them, their students, and the administrators. Such presence may influence not only the educational process but also the feelings of all the faculty and students.

As for the second question, when the educational process is carried out face-to-face, the physical presence influences students' participation and attention in the class. In an online environment, the instruction changes significantly as teachers cannot monitor what their students do, like in the case that learners turn their cameras off. Teachers also struggled to have their students participate as they easily disengaged from the classes and focused on other activities. Furthermore, reading students' body language and gestures in online teaching is difficult so that strategies teachers may use in face-to-face classes cannot be applied in the remote mode. Despite teachers acknowledged this challenge, they did not mention any strategy implemented to overcome it. Essentially, teachers need to consider strategies to establish a stronger connection and rapport with their students since virtual spaces lack a physical presence.

The internet connection and coverage represent one of the major gaps governments and institutions still need to fulfill for students to access their classes. The lack of the internet services and/or its instability caused negative effects for students to take part in their lessons, especially those located in remote areas where internet infrastructure problems are evident. Students could not attend their synchronous classes, and as a response, teachers implemented other ways to deliver the content to students. For instance, the design and the delivery of guides to students who did not have either access to an internet connection, or a device was

the response some teachers used to overcome this pitfall. On the contrary, in the scenario where all the participants had internet access, their learning process was not significantly affected. Learners who live far from the urban areas experienced increased issues than those in and closer to the urban area due to the disparities in both countries concerning internet and infrastructure. Thereby, the lack of internet is a limitation for students learning process in the online mode as suggested by the teachers. It is valuable that teachers keep receiving training from pre-service and during in-service teaching in different methodologies and not only on the traditional face-to-face method. Although some teachers may be reluctant to the changes of education at present, benefits for both, teachers and students, can be evidenced.

The data in this study revealed that teachers usually use a set of platforms as a teaching strategy to deliver their lessons. They not only facilitate classes through SOT, but also through AOT as a complement for providing students opportunities to practice the language, engaging them to the lessons, or assigning homework. Some of the teachers guided their lessons merely synchronously through different platforms like Zoom, Teams, or Meets. Some others decided to combine the synchronous meetings with asynchronous platforms such as Google Classroom or a LMS, like Moodle. In both circumstances, teachers and students were connected either online or offline, which makes the teaching-learning process becomes stable, or even possible. Thus, such a strategy could fulfill the instruction when internet connectivity failures occur. Furthermore, the combination of platforms, for either synchronous or asynchronous lessons, may be beneficial for students since they have opportunities to practice even if they cannot attend the live sessions. The negative part may be that there is an overload of work for teachers as they are required to plan extra activities for the classes. In any case, supporting the class using various platforms was a common strategy implemented by teachers in this case study.

Teachers also made decisions on how to promote students' engagement. By allowing students to select the way homework is delivered, it can foster students' interest to work on assignments. As students were allowed to decide how they wanted to deliver their exercises (through a video, a poster, an image, or text), they were eager to elaborate their assignments. Hence, providing students the choice to decide how to submit the product of a task seems to be beneficial as it considers students' learning styles. Similarly, the use of diverse resources

to engage students like videos, images, and discussions can attract their attention and interest for the lessons. Multimedia resources play a significant role in students' engagement.

In addition, the teachers referred to the importance of having abilities to manage technology for educational purposes. For example, troubleshooting as a technical skill might be useful as both, teachers and students, can support themselves if they have issues when working with technology. Moreover, learners need to be able to use technology purposefully, not only for entertainment but for education. Taking advantage of the online resources, like Facebook, might assist students to develop abilities that can be transferred to education like asking questions, commenting on forums, writing on a wiki, or simply chatting through the functions available on the platforms. Finally, students are also required to learn how to use basic tools like email following the netiquette rules to have a concise interaction with the receiver. Therefore, developing and improving digital skills in the class can raise students' interest in learning by this modality.

Based on the results of this study, it can be said that a positive aspect was that teachers perceived the shift as something that added knowledge to their experience. They became interested in improving their technical skills since they recognized it as useful for teaching the class online. This is relevant because it helps teachers to adapt easily to teaching online. The results suggest that training is required not only for in-service but also for pre-service teachers.

The literature researched on the mandates taken by Colombian and Mexican governments, the different reports from the UNICEF, the Work Bank, OECD and the results of this study suggest that both countries faced similar challenges in terms of the access to technology by students, particularly those in primary and secondary schools, the lack internet services in places located far from the urban areas, and the limited digital skills teachers possessed and their experience teaching online. This is consistent to the results provided in this study. This can be taken as an opportunity by both nations to work together and develop strategies to provide access to a larger number of students, especially in the area of English language teaching as to both countries have developed their English national programs to increase their students' language levels. The next section provides the contributions and pedagogical implications.

5.2. Contributions and pedagogical implications

This study presents the experiences of six EFL teachers teaching in different countries in Colombia and Mexico during the pandemic of Covid-19. These teachers had to adapt their practice and implement diverse strategies to cope with the learning and institutional goals despite their limited experience teaching online. Thus, such information is delivered as a sample of the possible challenges that teachers faced by implementing the modality and the opportunities found to enrich the model in both countries. This might be of interest for researchers, other teachers, or related people in this area to expand their view of the consequences that pandemic caused and the experiences of these participants. As for professional development, the results of this study also show that teachers' online teaching skills are of importance for an effective online teaching-learning process. The teachers' experiences of teaching online revealed that there is a need for developing and enhancing their ICTs skills, included strategies to foster the teaching presence in online settings. Workshops aimed at providing teachers opportunities to learn and practice strategies used to cater to students' interests in computer-mediated lessons or develop the skills; or providing access to online training platforms for teachers to access at any time they have available for them to improve the TPACK skills. These abilities are crucial for teachers to make quality teaching decisions to improve their instruction. The experience of exploring the technology has led teachers to gain an understanding of web-based and desktop platforms for video conferencing, designing presentations and quizzes, editing videos, managing the class through LMS worth to be disseminated on YouTube channels or on Facebook virtual communities where teachers usually share their materials for other teachers to use. This can also promote teachers to rely on these communities or the multimedia online whenever they have doubts about using an application, or simply, to improve efficiency in terms of administering the class or developing their material.

For distance learning, it is relevant that teachers practice and test different alternatives that can help reach students at the distance. The use of cellphones as a tool is significant for education as students usually have access to them although in some cases this tool is underutilized. Therefore, it is essential to take advantage of the available technologies by devising strategies that allow students access to the class content and to interact with the teacher and their peers. It would be valuable to expose pre-service teachers to different types

of approaches like distance, blended, and flipped teaching-learning; thus, they can rely on the diverse alternatives to reach their students no matter the distance, or the extreme event that occurred.

5.3. Limitations

This study was also subject to limitations that influenced the acquisition of further data. At the beginning of 2021, a survey was sent to the interviewees; however, none of them answered it. This hindered the follow-up process. Only one teacher replied to the email explaining that he could not reply to the survey due to time constraints. A better way to follow-up participants would be through small conversations carried out by WhatsApp rather than sending a survey. The study is limited to the six teachers' experiences so the results cannot be generalized. There is a need to expand the view of the impact of the pandemic by integrating students, administrators, and parents' perceptions. Even though the sample of the research is not generalizable, it does reveal a small picture of a teacher in the same contexts faced.

5.4. Further research

Regarding online teaching, it would be interesting to follow-up teachers who have experienced the shift to understanding how the online teaching experience contributed to their face-to-face classes and their teacher development. It would be valuable to explore the coordinators and directors' perceptions about the faculty performance during the shift, and how the administrators had support teachers' teaching. Moreover, exploring the teachers' intention to continue teaching online and other related hybrid methods in Colombia and Mexico can be another topic that can offer options to teachers to give instructions. This can shed light on the needs that teachers and students face and what possible solutions can be found to strengthen the instructional model, which can be the answer to reach those students who are located in remote areas and help minimize the educational gap in both countries eventually.

As a final thought, this thesis project has focused on the experiences of six EFL teachers teaching online during the pandemic of Covid-19 in Colombia and Mexico. Even though the results cannot be generalized, it shows evidence on a small scale about the teachers' perception of online teaching and the decisions they made to continue with the

classes online. I consider that the role that technology plays in education, developing digital literacy, and improving the online teaching practice can bring positive impact on students learning process, for our professional development, and for strengthening the distance teaching-learning model.

5.5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the teachers' experiences about the implementation of online education during the Covid-19 pandemic revealed their perceptions as well as the challenges they and their students faced. In general, teachers considered that the process was challenging in the beginning, but they became used to the modality progressively. Preparation to teach-learn online, limited digital literacy to manage the applications and other software used during the class interaction, access to technological devices, and the coverage of the internet are the main issues education has in Colombia and Mexico, that needed to be addressed by these governments. Furthermore, the challenges emerged from the lack of face-to-face contact in the classroom was another essential element identified in the online modality as it influences students' behaviors and attitudes towards the classes and their educational process in consequence. As for the decisions they made to manage virtual instruction, teachers utilized different synchronous and asynchronous platforms that exposed students to different forms of learning. The use of strategies to engage students in the classes included the varied multimedia input, the students' option to decide how to deliver an assignment, providing learners autonomy to deliver their assignments, raising their enthusiasm by carried our activities that are of interest for students, and addressing students' professional needs, in the case of task-based activities were identified.

Finally, the data also indicates a need for teachers' professional development strategies for them to enhance their digital skills and take advantages of the varied resources available on the web. To illustrate this, teachers could explore videos uploaded on YouTube, or virtual communities on Facebook that allow interactions with other teachers to access pedagogical and technological knowledge that led to more effective classes. Additionally, the role of the institutions is fundamental for a steady educational process. Teachers who had been granted access to premium videoconference apps for free alleviate the costs they would need to cover if they had to pay. Finally, despite the resources provided by the governments to teach the English language, none of the participants referred to these resources that the

government provided as depicted in the literature review. It is recommended that teachers use the available resources, and that the governments examine if the strategies implemented, and the resources provided are effective.

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Appendix A: Interview

- 1.** Tell me about the context you teach? Which type(s) of institution(s)? -school, university, language institution- the group? The hours?
- 2.** How has schooling been impacted due to the shift from face-to-face to online teaching? -teaching in general, and your class.
- 3.** Which methodologies do you use to teach? Asynchronous, or synchronous? Which platform(s)? Which means of communication?
- 4.** How do you feel teaching online? Have you had any similar experiences before?
- 5.** What are the major challenges/ and positive factors you perceive about teaching online?
- 6.** What have you noticed about students' attitudes towards receiving online lessons?
- 7.** What are the main challenges you perceive in regard to engaging students in the classes? How have you managed it?
- 8.** What have you perceived about your students' ability to manage these tools for learning?
- 9.** What are the most salient challenges you have faced towards internet connectivity? How about your students?
- 10.** What can we take as teachers from this experience?

Appendix B: The Questionnaire

The questionnaire was developed online (<https://forms.gle/h9WdAV3LaxTNNsAF6>). Questions 3, 4, 5 allow multiple answers (this symbol means multiple answers) that can be seen in the online version. The version displayed here is to present the questions considered.

Information about the context of your class

Your opinion is important to develop this project. In this questionnaire, you will be asked to provide general information about your class. The goal is to obtain a better view and understanding of the context you teach. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me at alejandro.marin.gonzalez@gmail.com or +573192962988 on WhatsApp. Thank you in advance for your participation.

1. I have been teaching English for... (Write the number of years of experience.)
2. I teach... (Select the levels you teach)
 - Primary
 - Secondary
 - Preparatory
 - University
 - Language institution
3. The institution(s) I work for is/are...
 - Public
 - Private
 - Both
4. The classes are in the... (If you teach in different schedules, select "other option" and write it down)
 - Morning
 - Afternoon
 - Evening
 - Other
5. I'm in charge of (X) classes (Write the number of groups you guide)
6. Before the contingency, I used to teach about (X) hours per week. (Number of hours approximately you spend ONLY teaching, no planning)

7. Before the contingency, in face-to-face classes, I used to spend around (X) hours planning and evaluating my students. (Write how long you usually take in planning and evaluating your classes before the contingency)
8. During the contingency, I teach around (X) hours approximately. (Number of hours approximately you spend ONLY teaching, no planning.)
9. During the contingency, in online classes, I spend around (X) hours planning and evaluating my students. (Write how long you usually spend in planning and evaluating your classes during the contingency)
10. The number of students I have per class are from ___ to ___. (Write an approximation of the number of students you have per class)
11. How comfortable do you feel teaching online? (From 1 to 5, being 1 very uncomfortable and 5 very comfortable.)

Appendix C: Consent form

Consent Form to Participate in Interview

I am participating in an **interview** conducted by **Jhon Alejandro Marín González** from the **Universidad de Guanajuato**. I understand that this interview will gather **information** about my **experience teaching online**. I understand that the information collected will be used for **research purposes**.

1. My participation in this interview is **voluntary**. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation. I will be able to **withdraw** at any time without any penalty.
2. I understand that I can respond to all questions, and I have the right not to answer, or to stop the interview at any time.
3. I will be able to remain **anonymous**.
4. I understand that I will be able to answer the questions either written, or voice/ video recorded.

I clearly understand the procedures described above which are also verbally explicit in the interview. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a digital copy of this form.

[x] I give the permission to present my answers orally and be recorded.

Name of subject:

Date:

Thank you for your participation

*If any question, please contact **Jhon Alejandro Marín González** at ja.marinogonzalez@ugto.mx or +57 3192962988 WA*

Appendix D: Sample of the interview and coding

| | | | |
|-----------------------------------|----|---|--|
| | 53 | Alejandro | |
| | 54 | 0 - 0 | |
| | 55 | ¿Cuáles crees que que ha sido como los muchos desafíos más grandes a los que tú te has enfrentado ahorita que estás enseñando virtual? | |
| Teacher challenge | 56 | El primer desafío es tratar de llegar a todos los estudiantes. O sea, que todos tengan la explicación. Entonces me toca enviar un tema de mil maneras, cierto, para los que se pueden conectar porque ahora sí, ya del colegio y nos dijo que debíamos dar clases sincrónicas, pero pues de un salón se conecta, Digamos que el quince veinte por ciento. Entonces los que se conectan bien tiene su clase sin falta. Los que no se conectan, los que de pronto no tienen acceso a una red WiFi, o solamente datos. Entonces hay que hacerles llegar de alguna manera la información, sea por imágenes, o sea por guías. Nosotros diseñamos guías también y la dejamos en el colegio. Ellos van, las recogen y se las llevan para la casa, resuelven y las vuelven a dejar para que nosotros las calificuemos. Entonces, cómo ponerles a ellos las mismas instrucciones y las explicaciones en la guía? Y es desafiante, sea pensar y ser muy empático y tratar de pensar en cómo voy a explicar este tema aquí, de manera que el estudiante solito en la casa, porque ni siquiera pensar en ni siquiera se puede contemplar la posibilidad de que los padres le ayude, porque muchas veces tan muy solitos. Entonces, cómo? Cómo hacer para que cuando él lea estas instrucciones las entienda y haga el trabajo como debe ser. Entonces el primero desafío es como tratar de llegar a todos los estudiantes. El segundo desafío es no solamente llegar a ellos, sino que entiendan realmente lo que lo que yo les estoy explicando. Entonces, cómo utilizar los materiales que tengo la mano para explicarles? Yo en mi casa no tengo el tablero, Entonces me toca con papel. Marcadores En los videos tutoriales también con papel, marcadores, editar los videos para que quede bien centrado. Pues todo lo que yo escribo. Aprender a utilizar | |
| Teaching decisions & strategies | 57 | | |
| Teacher challenge | | | |
| Gained ability | | | |
| | 20 | 0 - 0 | |
| | 21 | [0:04:54] Pues yo creo que todo sale algo positivo y algo negativo. Voy a empezar como lo a llamar negativo, porque en realidad, si pone en desventaja a los estudiantes. Y es que por tratarse de una de una institución pública, pues la población que accede a estas instituciones públicas, generalmente es población, digamos, pobre, cierto clasificado, estratificada en estratos cero uno y dos, porque además del colegio tiene muchos estudiantes provenientes de veredas en todos los días. De ellos no tienen, pues como acceso a las herramientas tecnológicas necesarias para poder | |
| Lack of coverage and connectivity | | | |
| Lack of coverage and connectivity | | hacer la transición a una educación virtual. Las Dos primeras semanas fueron traumáticas, muy traumáticas porque pues primero estábamos todos, como ensayando metodologías nuevas. Yo, por ejemplo, por mi parte cree unas páginas web, unos blogs que finalmente no me sirvieron de nada porque vi que era más difícil trabajar lo de esa manera. Al inicio las instrucciones en el colegio era que no íbamos a tener clases sincrónicas, no vamos a tener encuentros por Meets, por alguna de las de las plataformas pues para videoconferencia, videollamada porque no todos los estudiantes tenían conexión. Entonces lo primero que hicimos fue un sondeo con todos los padres de familia llamándolos, contactando los a todos para ver cuál era su colección, no como era la la manera de de ellos conectarse, si tenían celular, computador, si solamente contaba con datos o si tenían, pues tal vez como un | |
| Teacher's feelings | | | |
| Teaching decisions & strateg | | | |
| Institution's decision | | | |
| Institution's decision | | | |

1/10