English Teachers' Approaches to E-teaching during the Second Term of Emergency Remote Teaching[1]

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Abstract

Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) has disrupted teaching situations around the world. In Mexico, the first term taught with ERT was characterized by an abrupt transition that caught many institutions and teachers unprepared. The second term of ERT was a more planned process where training was provided to teachers; nevertheless, little is known about how English teachers approached online teaching in response to a shifting, complex teaching situation. This phenomenographic study aimed at characterizing the approaches to e-teaching of a group of sixteen Mexican ELT and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) faculty members in connection with their perceptions of the teaching situation. Interviews, discovery-based coding, and theme analysis were used. The findings show that many teachers adhered to less sophisticated approaches, in part due to negative perceptions of the teaching situation. A minority held complex, collaboration-focused approaches to e-teaching. However, some teachers with negative views implemented sophisticated approaches, while some who held complex views could not implement them due to constraints in the teaching situation and their personal lives. The digital gap and student dishonesty and disengagement were among the negative elements of the teaching situation that had an impact on teachers' approaches. These findings suggest that teachers need more training in collaborative, knowledge-building approaches and governments need to do more to address the digital gap.

Resumen

La enseñanza remota de emergencia (ERE) ha sido disruptiva para las situaciones de enseñanza en todo el mundo. En México, el primer semestre de la ERE se caracterizó por una transición abrupta para la cual muchas instituciones y profesore no estaban preparados. El segundo semestre fue un proceso más planificado que incluyó capacitación para los profesores. Sin embargo, se sabe poco sobre cómo los profesores de inglés abordaron la enseñanza en línea en respuesta a una situación de enseñanza compleja y cambiante. Este estudio fenomenográfico usó entrevistas, codificación por descubrimiento y análisis temático para describir los abordajes de la e-enseñanza de un grupo de 16 profesores de inglés. Los resultados muestran que muchos profesores siguieron enfoques poco sofisticados. Ello se debió parcialmente a percepciones negativas de la situación de enseñanza. Una minoría siguió enfoques complejos hacia la e-enseñanza, centrados en la colaboración. Sin embargo, algunos profesores con visiones negativas implementaron abordajes sofisticados, en tanto que algunos con ideas complejas no pudieron implementarlas debido a limitaciones en la situación de enseñanza y en su vida personal. La brecha digital y la deshonestidad y falta de involucramiento estudiantiles estuvieron entre los elementos negativos de la situación de enseñanza que impactaron los abordajes. Estos hallazgos sugieren que los profesores necesitan más capacitación en abordajes colaborativos centrados en la construcción del conocimiento y que los gobiernos necesitan hacer más para atender la brecha digital.

Introduction

E-teaching or teaching with the web (González, 2012) has been a vital element in education during Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT). ERT is the label used to describe the transitory teaching mode implemented by most educational institutions to continue providing classes to their student population during confinement (Hodges et al, 2020). As a result, a large number of students worldwide have been involved in some form of ERT (Amin & Sundari, 2020). At the time of submission of this manuscript (September 2021), ERT was still being used in higher education and most other educational levels in the authors' country, Mexico.

The sudden nature of the transition to ERT during the first months of 2020 resulted in unplanned teaching processes that were very different from typical online teaching practices (Cifuentes-Faura, 2020). Even though ERT in its different modes allowed countries to continue to provide education, it is undeniable that ERT disrupted teaching-learning practices due to the speed of changes and the lack of preparedness of many teachers and learners (Berbar, 2021; Badilla Quintana et al., 2020; MacIntyre et al., 2020; Gao & Zhang,

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2020). Low- and middle-income countries, like Mexico, were particularly affected due to limited access to technology and limited training in online teaching and autonomous learning (Juárez, 2020; Juárez & Perales, 2021).

In Mexico, institutions of higher education began to train faculty in online teaching in May of 2020 and continue to do so. They also created and implemented policies regarding which platforms to use and how to approach ERT. For example, some institutions issued guidelines mandating a specific number of synchronous contact hours per week as well as the medium to do so. These policies stand in contrast to the implementation of ERT during the first months of the confinement. In the context where the present study was conducted, there was minimal institutional guidance on the specifics of ERT and no or minimal support. As a result, teachers and students experienced many negative emotions and outcomes (Juárez & Perales, 2021). This teaching situation later changed to one with clearer policies and increased institutional support, a change that was perhaps mirrored in many other contexts worldwide. It is therefore relevant to explore how teachers approached ERT during this period characterized by a more structured institutional approach to ERT. For the sake of practicality, we call this period the second phase of ERT. Specifically, this study addressed the following questions:

1. *How did teachers approach online teaching during the second phase of ERT?*
2. *How did their approaches relate to their conceptions of elements of the teaching situation and changes therein?*
3. *What conceptions did they hold about changes or lack thereof in their approaches to teaching regarding the first phase of ERT?*

With these questions, we aim to characterize teachers' approaches to e-teaching in connection with their perceptions of the dynamic ERT teaching situation. It has been shown that teachers' perceptions of the teaching situation affect their approaches to teaching (González, 2012). Because Covid-19 greatly disturbed teaching situations all over the world, exploring these questions can shed light on the evolving needs of teachers during ERT and offer insights for policymakers and teacher educators on how to address them. Being prepared to meet these needs is important due to the possibility of recurring ERT events in the future, either on a global scale or locally as a result of natural disasters limited to specific geographic areas (Juárez Díaz & Perales, 2021).

Literature Review

Teaching in ERT times has been widely investigated, some studies have reported challenges during ERT mainly at the beginning of ERT. A great number of studies identified the digital gap as a challenge during ERT (Abou Shaaban, 2020; Alkamel et al., 2021; Amin & Sundari, 2000; Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020; Berbar, 2020; Fitri, & Putro, 2021; Ghounane, 2020; Karataş, & Tuncer, 2020; Lassoued et al., 2020; Naqvi, & Zehra, 2020; Ng, 2020; Popa et al., 2020). Insufficient teacher training was also a challenge (Abou Shaaban, 2020; Gao, & Zhang, 2020; Gufron & Rosli 2021; Monjezi et al., 2021).

Other challenges were related to lack of technology, internet, and connectivity issues (Afrin, 2020; Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020; Juárez, 2020; Devkota, 2021; Fitri & Putro, 2021; Gufron & Rosli 2021; Hazaea & Toujani, 2021; Hosszu & Rughiniș, 2020; Lassoued et al., 2020; Sepulveda-Escobar & Morrison, 2020). Another challenge was to promote speaking during ERT since that skill was the most negatively affected (Karatas & Tuncer). A lack of training caused teacher frustration during ERT (Bebar, 2020). Other negative emotions were caused by work overload (Bailey & Lee, 2020; Berbar, 2020; Farrell & Stanclik, 2021; Ghounane, 2020; Hosszu, & Rughiniș, 2020; Juárez, 2020; Khatoony, & Nezhadmehr, 2020; Lassoued et al., 2020; MacIntyre et al., 2020; Ng, 2020). Some teachers reported challenges specific to language learning, such as developing speaking skills or promoting student participation (Assalahi, 2021; Karataş, & Tuncer, 2020; Naqvi, & Zehra, 2020; Oraif, & Elyas, 2021).

Approaches to e-teaching

We follow González (2012, p. 978) in using "e-teaching" to refer to "teaching using the web," which was the primary medium to deliver ERT in Mexico during the Covid-19 confinement. In phenomenographic research, the term "approaches" refers to people's ways of doing meaningful actions (Marton & Booth, 1997). Approaches encompass both people's planned actions and their reasons for acting in such ways, or strategies and intentions (Trigwell et al., 1994). Several approaches to e-teaching have been identified in the literature. They generally fall on a continuum where one of the poles is focused on content, the technology used to deliver it, and teachers themselves, and the other is focused on students and critical, collaborative learning (Chen & Tsai, 2021; Ellis et al., 2009; González, 2012; Khan & Markauskaite, 2017). Studies seeking connections between approaches and teachers' conceptions of the teaching situation are called relational

(González, 2012). In general, negative perceptions of the teaching situation lead teachers to adopt less sophisticated approaches (i.e. those focused on themselves, the content, or the technology), whereas positive perceptions lead to more student-centered approaches, but unexpected associations may occur (González, 2012).

Methodology

Like González (2012), this is a qualitative, phenomenographic study with thematic analysis. Phenomenography affords explorations of variations in the way participants experience a phenomenon (Marton & Booth, 1997). The study was conducted at the Faculty of Modern Languages (FML) of the University of Central Mexico (UCC, a pseudonym). The first author contacted UCC teachers by phone (she knew all of them personally) to tell them about the study, then sent them informed consent letters via email, collected their signed consent letters, and interviewed the participants in Spanish, their native language. The sampling was purposive and had the goal of capturing maximal variation inexperience, which is the purpose of phenomenography. Sixteen teachers who agreed to participate were interviewed, which meets the minimum number recommended for this kind of study (Trigwell, 2000). The participants had to be involved in ERT and be members of FML. Three teachers (18.75%) were full-time professors, two teachers (12.5%) were half-time professors and 11 teachers (68.75%) were hourly lecturers. Three held PhDs (18.75%) and 13 MAs (81.25%). Fourteen participants (87.5%) taught English at UCC's Language Center and teacher training courses at the BA level in English language teaching (ELT); two (13.5%) only taught teacher training courses at the BA level in ELT. FML offered blended-learning and face-to-face ELT degrees, and seven of our participants (43.7%) had taught in the blended-learning program before the pandemic, versus nine (56.3%) who had not. Four participants (25%) were men and 12 (75%) were women. Their ages ranged from 31 to 56 years old.

The interview was the data collection technique, its purpose was to "encourage the interviewees to reveal as much as possible about their ideas and their experience" (Bowden, 2005, p.18). The interview protocol consisted of 15 yes- no and open questions adapted from Juárez & Perales (2021). They can be found in Appendix 1. Following the suggestion "to elicit underlying meanings and intentional attitudes towards the phenomenon being investigated" (Åkerlind, 2005, p, 65), why and how questions were included and also asked impromptu as necessary during the interviews. The interviews were conducted and recorded in Microsoft Teams. They lasted 38.25 minutes on average. The total length of transcription was 125 pages.

Data analysis began just after the interviews and transcriptions were concluded so that data reproducibility is ensured, and the categories obtained in the analysis are related across all interviews (Bowden, 2005). The researchers followed a team approach (Åkerlind, 2005; Green, 2005). They read the transcripts several times to gain data understanding and manageability. Then they began to compare similarities and differences across the data, generated initial categories, checked them against the data, discussed adjustments, and refined the categories. This was done manually with the support of Microsoft Excel© and Microsoft Word©. This process was repeated recursively until the final categories stabilized in a parsimonious, hierarchically arranged outcome space that reflected the participant's approaches to online teaching during ERT as well as the intentions and strategies connected with each approach (González, 2012; González-Ugalde, 2014). Then, a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; González, 2012) was used to examine perceptions of the teaching situation in connection to the second phase of ERT and changes to about the first phase. We followed the method in González (2012) to identify associations between these themes, phenomenographic categories, and individual teachers.

Results

Four categories of conceptions about ERT emerged from the analysis. They are described below. The discussion of each category is punctuated by quotations from interviews that illustrate their various aspects. When applicable, they are also intertwined with references to changes in the teaching situation and the teachers' perceptions thereof that help explain their intentions and strategies.

Category A – Teacher-centered planning.

This category conceives of ERT as a process of careful planning. Its strategies are focused on providing content and scheduling all activities in advance. The intentions behind planning vary a great deal. At the lower end of sophistication, the intention behind careful planning is to save teachers' time and effort. This follows from a realization that the transition to ERT during the spring of 2021 had immensely increased their workload due to its unplanned nature, which led to rushed, time-consuming planning and feelings of exhaustion.

> *The workload was exhausting, exceedingly demanding. It required from me, I mean, I had five classes and two, for or six contact hours per class per week. So, I was teaching twenty-four hours per week and investing at least another ten on planning and testing. In truth, I felt exhausted.* (P13)

> *The time investment is huge. You can't tell weekdays from weekends and there is no separation between your home and the workplace. Your day-to-day life, your kids, your chores, your cooking meshes with your workspace and that is complicated… one life is not enough.* (P4)

Some teachers reported realizing that they could prevent this undesirable outcome by using the summer of 2020 to plan the fall courses carefully. Below are examples of this information-centered strategy:

> *What I did during the summer was to work on my instructional design. Now I did plan more with a basis on my prior experience. I planned everything they were going to do, how many synchronous sessions we'd have.* (P3)

> *I learned from the previous term that students needed to have activities planned per week from the first class to the last one. I had already planned the entire school calendar from the moment we began… from Day One I presented the schedule to the students, I uploaded files on the platform, and students could see all the topics that we were going to be studying in each class.* (P9)

Teachers reported selecting and designing materials carefully so that they would be self-explanatory and, in the case of tests, self-grading. The intention behind this strategy was to free-up time by minimizing teacher-student interaction:

> *The materials should be explicit enough so that students understand without the need to work with the teachers… something that has worked well with them has been the issue of tests. This time I designed self-grading tests so that they wouldn't have to ask me any questions.* (P4)

Other teachers saw the university-promoted transition to more synchronic forms of teaching as an opportunity to stop spending time and effort on the design of asynchronous e-lectures. A change in the teaching situation was that the university mandated synchronous video calls during class hours and provided the means to hold them. Because of this, teachers could deliver lectures as they normally would before ERT:

> *Preparing presentations* [during spring 2020] *took many hours uhh selecting and curating material and then explaining it uhh and then thinking about a task and then giving feedback. This was very tough on me. So, this fall I didn't prepare presentations anymore. I delivered my lectures synchronously and just spent time designing asynchronous activities.* (P7)

Another intention in this category was to discipline students. Two teachers reported that the intention behind her scheduling all activities and providing all content was so that students would not have any excuses for not submitting work on time.

> *I used to be* flexible [during spring 2020] *but now not anymore. Let me tell you why. We have a calendar that they know about from Day one. We have a system in place and if we do not follow it, we won't get the results we expect. In virtual education, you either submit your work as required or you don't submit it at all… I am done being flexible.* (P13)

> *I had all my tests scheduled from the beginning so they would know all the dates. In this way, they wouldn't be able to make excuses saying that they didn't know about the test dates because everything is in the course schedule. If a student didn't know about them is because they didn't check the schedule. This was a major improvement for me.* (P9)

P13 used to be flexible during spring 2020 in terms of accepting late submissions, but she stopped doing this in the fall. It seems that her new approach was connected to a perception in the teaching situation: that of student dishonesty. P2 also reported that her focus on content was driven by student dishonesty:

> *I demanded and graded lots of assignments because I realized that these kids were sharing their answers and only changed their names. I probably exaggerated the number of assignments because of that, perhaps I focused more on quantity than on quality*. (P2)

This issue was brought up by five participants. Like P2, in some cases, it was connected to cheating and plagiarism. In other cases, it was related to a lack of attendance and general disengagement under what the teachers perceived to be false pretenses.

> *Students aren't focused. It's unfair that I'm seated here for two hours, and they are doing other things when they should be attending classes. Students use the pandemic and virtual education as excuses, they say for example that they don't have WiFi at home and they need to go over to grandpa's place, but grandpa has Covid and then they can't go there. So, their attitude was doing nothing or doing the least possible amount of effort in virtual classes.* (P9)

Category B – Student-centered planning

Like the previous category, this category also conceives ERT primarily in terms of planning and also uses information-centered strategies. The difference regarding Category A lies in the intention behind the

strategies. In this category, the intention underlying the focus on planning was to maximize learning. Teachers reported becoming more selective about the content they chose to focus on and creating their own content. This was a response to changes in the teaching situation. In the spring term, teachers were not free to design their own exams for students, but had to use standardized tests for each level. As a result, they felt pressured to cover all the content and work with all the exercises in the textbook. In the fall term, teachers were given the freedom to design their own exams. Consequently, they were able to select the content that they believed was most worth focusing on, and they also felt empowered to design their own materials with a focus on what would help their students to learn.

> *In the spring term, I focused on working with the textbook the way we usually did because I knew they would be tested on the textbook content. Then my concern was covering every single page of every single unit. Now that we have a choice, I don't push myself and them so hard. I try to be selective about each exercise and I skip those that I deem unnecessary. This frees up time for doing other activities that I design myself, that I think will be more helpful to them.* (P2)

> *So, I generated tasks, … I organized the course into small tasks, small tasks, those small tasks … to recreate some simpler things to go on developing something more complex.* (P14)

Category C – Communication

This category conceives of ERT as a process of teacher-student interaction initiated by the teacher. The intention behind it is to monitor and manage students' attention, and the strategies are aimed at that goal. For teachers, this process is about addressivity in the Bakhtinian sense of the term, i.e., positioning students as actual addressees of teacher communication and thus turning them into active listeners.

> *With technology, teaching becomes … more personalized, eh… So, here when we speak, it is to speak in a personal way, this, for example, let's think that you are a student and I say Catalina, remember that you have to do that… That is, I select certain students to talk to so they realize that I am addressing them. I think that is very important and it definitely changed the way I see things.* (P6)

These intentions and strategies appear to respond to a perception of insufficient student participation reported by five participants:

> *My students won't talk so I forced them to, I started addressing them one by one and they talked. Otherwise, they wouldn't…* (P4)

> *What does frustrate me is that, as soon as the class starts, everybody turns their camera off and I feel I'm speaking to the void, who knows if anyone's listening.* (P3)

> *It helps that some do turn their cameras on and I can see them participate, I can relate to them. But with others who don't turn their cameras on or use nicknames, it's very difficult and, unfortunately, university policy is such that you can't force them to use their real names or turn their cameras on. That made me lose confidence because you have a group of students you can see and then another group where it's just names or drawings, so it's like you're dealing with numbers. Then, even if you want to treat students as human beings, as people, you can't.* (P5)

> *I would ask "is Katie there?" and some didn't even answer. I would even joke that they were out having lunch or something. And I am sure the student was there, but they wouldn't answer because they thought it was easy to come up with an excuse like bad WiFi. That was very common*. (P7*)*

> *Some students were very rude. They would mute other people, even me. They did it to me twice; I was talking and then one of them told me they couldn't hear me and I realized someone had muted me. I would joke about it, but it was rude. I didn't like that.* (P9)

These teachers' comments highlight elements of the teaching situation that influence their conceptions. One of them is university policy, which did not allow teachers to force students to use their real names or show their faces. This led to perceptions of difficulty in communicating with students despite the synchronous video calls that became mandatory during the Fall of 2020. The inability to elicit participation and see students led teachers to believe that students were being purposefully disengaged, which caused intense feelings of frustration. P5 offered an example of the intensity of such feelings when he said that "even if you want to treat students as human beings, you can't". Some teachers used humor as a coping strategy to cope with this situation.

Other teachers, however, reported that students were engaged, and they used teacher-led communication to monitor and support students' progress and achievement. A participant said:

> *I was with the students, reminding them of dates, sending them explanations, uh and being in constant communication with them because uh, they think that maybe we leave them to do the activity on their own, as they can do the activities, but … I have learned that you have to be accompanying the students all the time in the learning process.* (P10)

Another intention behind this approach was to give collective feedback to save time since it is sometimes more efficient than one-on-one feedback:

> *Synchronous sessions allow you to give them feedback as a group instead of one-on-one. The ability to take the mistakes of a few students and talk about them is a good thing and it helps with time management. Time was an important factor in making decisions about feedback*. (P4)

Category D – Collaboration and knowledge building

This category conceives of ERT as a process of collaboration and knowledge-building. The intentions are more uniform than in the previous categories: they focus on providing teachers and students opportunities to build knowledge through collaborative activities. Strategies are firmly focused on affording opportunities for interaction and collaboration to happen. Some strategies are content-focused, but their goal is to free-up time for and collaboration. Teacher-student interaction is not only about delivering content or providing guidance with course scheduling but about building knowledge. In this category, planning-focused, time-saving strategies such as using self-grading exercises and tests were driven by an intention to free up time to devote it to understanding students' learning processes and build knowledge with them through dynamic, tailored feedback:

> [In the fall] *I looked for or created self-grading materials. …* [in the spring] *it wasn't clear to me whether I had addressed their questions. They would tell me, for example, "Miss, I don't understand the present continuous" and I would ask them to see a presentation but there was no teacher-student communication to give feedback and build a deeper understanding. That's why I decided to make changes so we would have the time for me to explain the topic and answer any questions*. (P4)

Teachers focused on creating activities where students would have opportunities to communicate with each other and with third parties in meaningful ways, thus creating addressivity as in the previous category. The difference is that, in this category, communication is not only teacher-student, but also student-student and student-other parties, and it is about meaningful activities. In that way, real communicative situations where students need to address actual audiences beyond the teacher were created.

> *I used discussion forums a lot. They needed to answer their classmates' questions and comments and see the different ways to carry out a translation task. I really liked that. Even though it's a small class, they've done really well. Their comments and examples are good.* (P4)

> *This is about generating interaction among them. They had video calls for pairwork and then they wrote reports. We used the breakout rooms in Zoom and we worked in GoogleDocs synchronously.* (P5)

> *They needed to wear costumes for Halloween. I loved it because they were very enthusiastic and very supportive of one another. They practiced the language because they needed to describe the clothes they were wearing. There was interaction, they turned on their cameras and the other classmates gave them feedback through the chatroom. They pointed out mistakes and reminded them that the color comes first and then the piece of clothing. They evaluated themselves, practiced, and had fun.* (P1)

> *I got the families involved. The students said, "now they can see that I'm learning, right?" Then I had students that told me "Miss, look, I'm showing my nephew and that's motivating." So I tell them that a family member needs to be present, a sibling, mom, dad, whoever they want. Some invite their whole families.* (P3)

> *We had pairwork and groupwork. There were specific activities for all the skills, listening, reading, writing, and speaking. Some were collaborative.* (P10)

> *I work with small groups and those small groups interact. They can speak and listen. I try for the members to have an affinity with one another. Most of the interaction has taken place within these small groups and it's been very successful, very successful.* (P14)

These interaction- and collaboration-focused strategies enabled the teachers that put them in practice to overcome difficulties with the practice of speaking perceived by other teachers. These difficulties were related to aspects of the teaching situation such as the digital gap and the size of classes.

> *Maybe what we need to practice more was speaking. We don't do it much in face-to-face classes so it's even more difficult online because of time and because many times their microphones didn't work.* (P1)

> *I would like to develop speaking, that is the ability I haven't worked with, but it's due to the circumstances. If I had all 41 of them speaking, imagine that! There isn't enough time. Focusing on the four skills is too much… About speaking, I have only asked them to record two videos, which is very little. I think that the development of oral skills has not been as I would like.* (P2)

One of the participants extended this knowledge-building approach even further by incorporating critical information literacy to her course in the form of teaching students to look for and select online sources. She did this in response to a perceived need in the teaching situation, namely that students did not possess sufficient information literacy to carry out assignments:

> *They had to search for information on other Websites and I think that was challenging for them because at first, they all came with the same information. They would enter their search terms to a search engine and just copy-paste from the first hit they got. So, I told them that that wasn't okay, that it was necessary to enrich the information with other sources. So as a strategy they learned to find information, that made them critical*. (P13)

The perception of insufficient information literacy or other types of digital literacy was shared by another three participants. P15 reported having to spend time and effort teaching students how to use several basic tools for virtual learning:

> *They didn't know how to use Google Drive©, they had never worked with it and didn't know how to post documents… they don't know how to post assignments, or they post them to the wrong place, so I find tutorial videos for them. They couldn't work with Word© so I also found tutorials for them too*. (P15)

P7 offered a pithy phrase that summarizes this element of the teaching situation:

> *The students do not fit the profile for distance learning, then it's very naïve to think they will adapt immediately, they can't. They might be very good face-to-face students, but they have not managed to become autonomous learners*. (P7)

Interestingly, one participant, P12, reported holding Approach D conceptions, but she had to shift to practices of Approaches B and C because her students had too many distractions that prevented them from working collaboratively:

> *You could hear their mom fighting with their brother, trucks passing by, dogs barking, TV shows, students at their workplace doing work like cleaning a warehouse or working at a restaurant. They have many distractors, so I adapted my teaching.* (P12)

Hierarchical relationships and changes

Categories A and B are the least sophisticated ones, and they were held by all the participants. C and D are more sophisticated and the teachers that held them also held A and B. Only seven participants held Category D, the most sophisticated one, which is perhaps an indication that the rest of the participants need further training in collaborative, knowledge-building activities. When participants were asked about changes in their conception of ERT between the spring and fall of 2020, all of them reported realizing that they needed to plan their teaching very carefully and implemented more content-focused and information-focused strategies than they had done during the spring term. Their shared conception was that the transition to ERT was hasty and unplanned, which of course is inherent to the nature of ERT as it happened in most countries after the onset of the pandemic. As a result, Approaches A and B became more salient for them going into the fall term.

As reported above, planning freed up time and allowed seven participants to pursue a communication-based approach and six to follow a collaborative, knowledge-building approach. This is not to say that they hadn't held conceptions related to these approaches in the spring term or before. Rather, it seems that the chaotic nature of the transition to ERT, the technological and training limitations inherent to its hasty nature, and the impact of the confinement on their lives prevented them from following these approaches before the fall term.

It is interesting to note that two participants declared their skepticism of online education and ERT as effective for EFL learning (P5 and P9, without prior online teaching experience) but they also noted that they had overcome that skepticism to some extent as they realized it was possible to have interaction and collaboration online. Three participants, however, did not show evidence of the more sophisticated approaches and adhered only to A and B. One of them (P2) had prior online teaching experience, and the others did not (P7 and P9). P12 also holds Categories D but she strategically chose to follow approaches B and C because of her students' difficulties in participating in communicative, collaborative activities.

Other key themes in the teaching situation

This section deals with key themes that the participants perceived in the teaching situation, which are not related specifically to any of the categories. These themes are the digital gap and increased confidence with online teaching. Eight participants reported being aware of students' limited access to technology and the difficulties this created during ERT:

> *I was very empathetic to students. We, teachers, can cause them stress if we don't understand that they have slow, spotty Internet connections, that they use cell phones, and don't have computers at home. And they were understanding of me too because sometimes I couldn't log in.* (P8)

> *Some students told me that they had to go back to their villages and there was no internet there. Another one told me that he'd lost his job and couldn't afford to get a data plan*. (P3)

Like P8, another two participants reported that they also experienced the digital gap: they didn't own computers or didn't have access to a good Internet connection or had no training in online teaching:

> *The spring term was frustrating because I had no idea which platform to use and I didn't have the necessary equipment to work with my students.* (P1)

> *I had to move to a village to have more room for my kids and I didn't have internet access.* (P4)

These conceptions are connected to contextual factors. Many students and teachers at UCC came from disadvantaged families that lived in rural areas and could hardly afford computers and good internet access. In other contexts, rural areas suffered from insufficient accessibility to the Internet. Teachers' salaries were very low, which also resulted in limited equipment and internet access in their homes for many of them. These problems are exemplified by the following comments.

> *My students also told me that that they did not have a computer and their parents also had to go into debt, many did not even have a cell phone.* (P1)

> *I didn't have a computer…I had to ask for money here and there to buy the computer, I knew this was coming so I prepared a cell phone for one of my children, and my other children had to go with my sister.* (P1)

> *We only had two computers at home… I had a newer one and an older one. I had to give those computers to my daughters for their classes, the online classes… We had to buy another machine.* (P2)

> *I didn't have internet in my village, so it was quite hard to work.* (P8)

Despite these limitations, all the participants reported feeling more confident about teaching online during the fall term. This was most likely due to the provision of training courses undertaken by UCC during the summer term. Another policy that likely helped this sense of increased competence was the adoption of official platforms policies for ERT during the fall. Some teachers also managed to train themselves on the use of different online teaching tools.

> *I was ready to teach online with minimal effort. Then it was an amazing improvement. I felt really good and in fact, I like working online now so much better than in the past term.* (P9)

> *Moodle and Teams courses were very helpful because the people that trained us knew the technology and the platforms well; it was very practical.* (P12)

> *Through watching tutorials and taking courses that UCC offered, I became more confident in platform use, but there is still a long way to go.* (P15)

Discussion

To address research question one, we conclude that all the participants approached ERT during its second phase as a planning process, with only a minority following more sophisticated approaches focused on communication, collaboration, and knowledge-building.

As for research question two, the planning approaches were clearly linked to a desire to save time and effort and were enabled by training in learning management systems (LMS) platforms, obtained independently or through UCC. This has been reported in other studies (Atmojo, & Nugroho, 2020; Fitri & Putro, 2021). Another intention behind this approach was to address student dishonesty, a problem reported by Karataş and Tuncer (2020). The communication approach was enabled by the policy shift mandating synchronous video calls. Its intentions and strategies were focused on addressivity and seem to respond to problems commonly identified in the ERT literature: student disengagement and lack of teacher-student eye contact and communication (Atmojo, & Nugroho, 2020; Alkamel et al., 2021; Gao, & Zhang, 2020; Gufron & Roziana 2021; Monjezi et al., 2021; Ng, 2020; Popa et al., 2020). Like the teachers in Aristovnik et al. (2020) and Hosszu and Rughiniş, (2020), some of our participants were exceedingly frustrated by this phenomenon.

The collaboration and knowledge-building approach was also afforded by the policy shift above and the provision of LMS platforms. It was intended to maximize knowledge-building and meaningful teacher-student and student-student collaboration. Like the teachers in Karataş and Tuncer (2020), some of our participants felt that speaking was not well-developed during ERT, but those who subscribed to this approach seem to have found ways to circumvent this issue through collaborative group work (Karataş, & Tuncer, 2020). Five of the participants in this approach had prior online teaching experience, while two did not (P5 and P15). This suggests that the first group of participants was able to apply previous knowledge to the new situation, while P1 and P15 perhaps developed it from training or, in the case of P5, on his own.

As for question three, the general conception is that the second phase was much more planned than the first one, as teachers knew the kinds of issues and negative experiences they had encountered and got training. It also involved more synchronous activities than the first phase due to policy changes and training. Thus, the planning approaches became more salient in their perception. Two participants reported having

overcome somewhat (but not totally) their initial skepticism toward online EFL teaching, an issue reported by Hosszu and Rughiniș (2020). All of them reported feeling more confident with online teaching despite the digital gap experienced by many students and some teachers.

Conclusions

As discussed above, all the research questions were addressed in a manner that met our overall goal to characterize the participants' approaches to e-teaching in connection to their perceptions of the ERT teaching situation has been met. As in previous studies (e.g., González, 2012), there was some association between negative and positive perceptions of the teaching situation and the participants' approaches. Those participants with more salient perceptions of negative student situations tended to follow Approaches A and B. However, negative perceptions appear to have led participants to adopt Approaches C and D as ways to address the undesirable elements of the teaching situation. It is noteworthy that the skeptical and most frustrated participant, P5 reported carrying out practices of Approach D. He is only one of two participants without prior online teaching experience to have done so. Nevertheless, P7, also frustrated and skeptical, reported remaining attached to Approach A. At the same time, negative perceptions prevented P4 and P12 from fully implementing the more sophisticated approaches that they espoused.

It seems that some participants were very resilient and able to implement strategic actions to improve teaching and learning despite their negative perceptions, while others were not. These results are more nuanced than those of previous studies which showed clearer associations between positive or negative perceptions of the teaching situation and approaches to teaching. This might be explained by the fact that these participants had either or both prior online teaching experience and time and training during the summer to reflect on what went wrong in the spring and plan accordingly.

Although the mixture of language teachers with teacher trainers was purposeful to achieve maximal variation, it can also be considered a limitation. Samples consisting of only one type of teacher might yield more insights into the specific needs of each group. Future studies should address this limitation. Another limitation is that we didn't probe further into teachers' beliefs and our examination of their prior involvement with technology was minimal. Future studies should attend to these dimensions more carefully to understand change and permanence in approaches to teaching. Of course, we recognize that approaches to teaching change across time and context. As such, the achieved categories of our participants might change in the future and a non-ERT context.

This study has implications for trainers and policymakers. That only six teachers reported following a knowledge-building approach strongly implies the need for more teacher training on ways to promote collaboration and knowledge-building online and CALL in general. At the same time, it looks like institutional efforts were quite successful in bringing about a more planned way of delivering ERT, which is likely to benefit learning. The digital gap continues to be a concern in high-inequality countries like Mexico, but also one that must be addressed to increase the resilience of educational systems in preparation for future ERT events.

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Appendix 1

Interview Questions

1. How did you conceive online teaching and learning at the beginning of the pandemic? Why?
2. Has that conception changed in this fall 2020 course? Why do you think that is or isn't so?
3. Did you take the training courses, the institution offered in March?
4. Did those courses help you? why?
5. How do you work in the sessions? And why do you work that way?
6. Have you changed the way were working in this course? Why would you say that you have or have not?
7. What criteria did you consider for those changes and why?
8. How do you feel working online and why?
9. Do you consider that your students have learned? Why do you think so?
10. Have you had any favorable experience in that course?
11. Is there any specific experience that you would rate as better than the others? If so, why?
12. Have you had any unfavorable experience?
13. Did you have any unfavorable experience that you can point out as the worst? If so, why do you think so?
14. Do you think that you had more favorable online teaching experiences in the fall than in the spring? If so, why?
15. Is there any other aspect that you consider relevant to mention about your online teaching experience during the pandemic?