

## **Designing Materials for Emergency Remote Language Teaching Contexts: A Qualitative Study of Pre-Service Teachers' Experiences**

**August 2021 – Volume 25, Number 2**

**Cristina A. Huertas-Abril**

University of Córdoba, Spain

<cristina.huertas@uco.es>

**Francisco Javier Palacios-Hidalgo**

University of Córdoba, Spain

<francisco.palacios@uco.es>

**María Elena Gómez-Parra**

University of Córdoba, Spain

<elena.gomez@uco.es>

### **Abstract**

*Emergency Remote Language Teaching is a new term coined after the concept of Emergency Remote Teaching (Hodges, et al., 2020), which emphasizes that teaching that is being done during emergencies and crises, as the pandemic caused by COVID-19, is neither distance nor online teaching properly. This paper explores the attitudes and perceptions of pre-service bilingual primary teachers at the University of Córdoba (Spain) regarding the design of socially and culturally responsive learning materials in a real Emergency Remote Language Teaching context. Due to the nature of this exploratory research, this study was designed to perform a qualitative analysis. To analyze the data, the grounded-theory scheme was followed to establish different categories and topics, then content analysis was applied, and finally, a manual SWOT analysis was created. Participants showed positive attitudes towards the design of materials for Emergency Remote Language Teaching, emphasizing the feeling of real teachers, the design of resources with a meaningful purpose, and the importance of 'thinking outside the box.' They also found challenges derived from the new, complex situation, and the lack of experience designing materials for distance teaching. Recommendations are proposed for teacher training and materials design in Emergency Remote Language Teaching contexts.*

**Keywords:** Emergency Remote Language Teaching, English for Social Purposes and Cooperation, teacher training, pre-service bilingual primary teachers, SWOT analysis

There is no doubt that language learning, and more specifically English, is increasingly becoming key both in international organizations (Jenkins, Baker, & Dewey, 2018) and in the labor market (Olney, 2017). Its relevance explains how English has grown into the quintessential first foreign language in almost all the world's educational systems (Andrade, 2016). Similarly, technology (in its multiple forms) has also changed the way participation in society is understood (Palacios-Hidalgo, et al., 2020), and so acquiring and developing competences and skills in this respect have become key educational objectives (European Parliament & Council of the European Union, 2006; Gutiérrez & Serrano, 2016).

Technology has been proved to bring significant benefits to English language learning, from early childhood education (Redondo, et al., 2020) to higher education (Fouz-González, 2019; Huertas-Abril, 2020), and even in bilingual education. However, in the context of the pandemic caused by COVID-19, it is necessary to seek motivating proposals that go beyond on-site technology-based strategies in order to promote critical thinking and guarantee the continuity of all teaching and learning processes in general (and of English in particular) at all educational stages (UNESCO & IESALC, 2020).

In the same line, with all the world's population facing an unprecedented health emergency, it seems necessary to go beyond traditional strategies for English language learning so that both teachers and learners can become more aware of its social implications. In this light, the English for Social Purposes and Cooperation (ESoPC) approach, an innovative teaching method aiming to develop or increase students' communicative skills and raise awareness towards social and cultural issues (Huertas-Abril, & Gómez-Parra, 2018), can constitute an interesting framework to promote meaningful and accessible learning of English, as well as responsible attitudes in contexts of Emergency Remote Teaching, term coined by Hodges et al. (2020), and more specifically of Emergency Remote Language Teaching (ERLT).

In this context, this paper aims to explore pre-service bilingual primary teachers' attitudes and perceptions regarding the design of ESoPC learning materials in the context of ERLT derived from the COVID-19 health crisis. For this purpose, the research questions were:

Research Question 1: What are the strengths and opportunities of designing ESoPC materials in a context of ERLT according to pre-service bilingual primary teachers' attitudes and perceptions?

Research Question 2: What are the weaknesses and threats of designing ESoPC materials in a context of ERLT according to pre-service bilingual primary teachers' attitudes and perceptions?

## **Literature Review**

By the end of June 2020, more than 1000 million students had been affected by school closures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic according to UNESCO (2020), over 60% of the total enrolled learners in the world. Together with the unprecedented natural disasters that characterize the current decade, much more inclusive and sustainable societies and educational systems need to be created all over the world in order to fight inequalities in education and deficiencies in technology-based learning and teaching (Giannini, 2020). At this juncture, educational institutions around the globe are facing challenges to effectively adapt their teaching. In the majority of cases, face-to-face teaching has been substituted by online courses

(UNESCO & IESALC, 2020). In this light, there are many possible varieties of teaching alternatives to on-site teaching, which scholars and experts in educational technologies (e.g., Moore, et al., 2011; Moskal, et al., 2013) have identified as distance learning (aiming at granting access to learning for people who are geographically distant), online learning (including technology-based learning experiences) or blended learning (broadly combining on-site and online learning), among others. However, Hodges et al. (2020) claim that what is being done during the coronavirus crisis is neither distance nor online teaching, but what they have called Emergency Remote Teaching:

*In contrast to experiences that are planned from the beginning and designed to be online, emergency remote teaching (ERT) is a temporary shift of instructional delivery to an alternate delivery mode due to crisis circumstances. It involves the use of fully remote teaching solutions for instruction or education that would otherwise be delivered face-to-face or as blended or hybrid courses and that will return to that format once the crisis or emergency has abated. The primary objective in these circumstances is not to re-create a robust educational ecosystem but rather to provide temporary access to instruction and instructional supports in a manner that is quick to set up and is reliably available during an emergency or crisis. (para. 18)*

In the case of language learning and teaching, specific considerations should be borne in mind, and we could explicitly consider ERLT. This should be therefore understood as a form of Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL), where language education is facilitated and/or supported by the use of technology, helping establish a temporary digital environment that promotes language learning and teaching in emergency situations. However, not only does ERLT involve applying technology to what in a non-emergency situation would be mainly delivered through face-to-face instruction, but it also means a resilient reflection on language teaching and learning, creative problem solving, and even a potential future requirement for education agents' skill set and competences.

ERLT should also be approached similarly to TELL when developing materials to allow students to develop their autonomy. In this light, remote language teaching materials have to be both interactive and individualized to guarantee that learners are able to continue learning from home without being physically present in the classroom.

Likewise, this temporary type of instruction allows a variety of learning paces for students (from autonomous to teacher-controlled learning process), different roles for both teachers and learners, and both synchronous and asynchronous communication. Consequently, it also necessarily implies some requirements (i.e., sufficient technology infrastructure, agents' digital skills, and school and government support for learners, educators, and families) that have to be considered to ensure the quality of the instruction while the emergency lasts (Hodges et al., 2020).

In this context of health crisis and emergency distance teaching, ERLT can benefit from the ESoPC approach. ESoPC can be defined as the process of teaching-learning English as a foreign language in any field of life (personal or professional, among others), where, besides acquiring or reinforcing communicative skills, key factors related to social awareness, civic values, and cooperation are addressed (Huertas-Abril, 2018). This approach explores topics of great social and cultural relevance while learning the language, aiming at developing students' communicative ability in English, cultural awareness, and social responsibility (Huertas-Abril,

& Gómez-Parra, 2018). Therefore, issues like immigration and refugees, gender equality, climate change, global crises, and pandemics are some of the interests of ESoPC. Following Palacios-Hidalgo (2020), the eight pillars of the ESoPC approach are:

- Authentic language use. ESoPC allows learners to access native-like language in real communicative situations. It enables students to get involved in social issues and promotes the use of real-life sources of information (e.g., social media).
- Meaningful learning. ESoPC favors the connection between previous and new knowledge and its application to real-life situations. It allows progressive contents' organization in networks of meaning and promotes better understanding.
- Learn to learn skills and autonomous learning. ESoPC encourages students in the management of their learning by teaching them how to use information appropriately. Teachers are thus responsible for teaching learners to solve problems individually and collectively, and for giving them feedback, scaffolding, and support.
- Cooperative learning. ESoPC promotes collaborative learning, in which students share ideas, make decisions, and put their interpersonal abilities into practice in order to create a shared, final product.
- Critical thinking. ESoPC allows students analyze and understand current social matters affecting the world, questioning prejudices and becoming active 21<sup>st</sup>-century citizens.
- Revised Bloom's taxonomy. ESoPC develops Bloom's Taxonomy's mental processes (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001), crucial for meaningful learning.
- Technology use. ESoPC is supported by the use of technology, providing students with real possibilities to become global and digital citizens.
- Multiple assessment techniques. Based on the premise that social and cultural issues are as important as the language itself, ESoPC pays attention to formative rather than summative assessment, allowing teachers to evaluate students' progression in language learning and awareness development.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

Owing to the nature of this exploratory research, this study was designed to perform a qualitative analysis following the Qualitative Evaluation Checklist (Patton, 2003). The main purpose of conducting a qualitative study is to examine in detail the opinions and experiences of the participants in order to understand of and/or interpret the phenomena according to the meaning that participants attach to them (Denzin, & Lincoln, 2017). With this objective, the methodological procedure of grounded theory (Glaser, & Strauss, 1967) was used to make a first approach to the phenomenon, as its main aim is to discover or produce a theory from the collected data (Pidgeon, & Henwood, 1997). Moreover, from a social constructivist point of view, the grounded theory provides the researchers with a kind of interaction with data that can lead to the construction of different categories, topics and theories (Charmaz, 1990; 2006).

For this study, therefore, the authors adopted grounded theory in order to find out four categories (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) based on the collected data from pre-service bilingual primary teachers about their experience on ESoPC in an ERLT environment. Then, and according to this framework, the researchers established all the stages of conducting this research, from raising research questions to data collection and analysis.

More specifically, five stages were established: (i) creating a timeline for the study; (ii) identifying the participants; (iii) establishing ethical guidelines (participants submitted their responses anonymously to guarantee confidentiality and these were analyzed once the course had finished); (iv) developing the analysis; and (v) using member checks “to reduce bias and increase credibility” (Hendricks, 2017, p. 65).

## **Participants**

The target population of this study was composed by the students of the course ‘English as a Foreign Language for Primary Education Teachers’, bilingual itinerary, of the University of Córdoba (Spain), in the 2019-2020 academic year. Three groups of students can be identified within this population: (i) Year 3 students of the BA in Primary Education (PS); (ii) Year 3 students of the Double BA in Primary Education and English Studies (DS); and (iii) Erasmus students (ES).

A non-probabilistic sample based on convenience was used for participants (N = 61). Eligibility criteria were based on proximity and participation in a teaching experience based on the design of ESoPC materials for the pandemic in a context of ERLT.

The distribution of the participants according to the three aforementioned groups was as follows: 37 PS (60.66%), 19 DS (31.15%), and 5 ES (8.20%). Moreover, 49 participants (80.33%) were female, and 12 (19.67%) were male. The mean age was 21.25 years (range = 20–27; SD = 1.545). Finally, regarding nationality, 56 participants (91.80%) were from Spain, while 2 participants (3.28%) were from Poland, 1 participant (1.64%) was from Austria, 1 participant (1.64%) was from Finland, and 1 participant (1.64%) was from Turkey.

## **Data Gathering**

We administered a 3 open-ended question instrument in English to students of the course ‘English as a Foreign Language for Primary Education Teachers’ who had previously designed ESoPC materials for the pandemic in a context of ERLT; therefore, the participants were selected through criterion referenced (purposive) sampling techniques (Mertens, 2014). The materials designed by the participants are available online in the online repository “Teaching English in Times of COVID-19”: <https://englishsocially.wixsite.com/covid> (Figure 1).

Participants were requested to respond to 3 open-ended questions on a voluntary basis, and they had to write their responses online via the official Moodle platform of the University of Córdoba (Spain). According to Patton (2003, p. 2), “Open-ended questions and probes yield in-depth responses about people’s experiences, perceptions, opinions, feelings, and knowledge. Data consist of verbatim quotations with sufficient context to be interpretable.”

The questions were: (i) What positive aspects have you found when designing your own teaching materials (e.g., how you felt by designing real, useful materials, competences that you have developed, etc.)?; (ii) What are the main challenges and difficulties that you have found when designing your own teaching materials (e.g., choosing the topic, online communication with your partner/s, online presentation of the proposal, etc.)?; (iii) What other ideas may you develop in English to help children, families and teachers regarding remote English language learning and teaching? All the participants’ responses were anonymized after their written consent to be used for research.



**Figure 1. Online repository “Teaching English in Times of COVID-19” (Source: Own elaboration)**

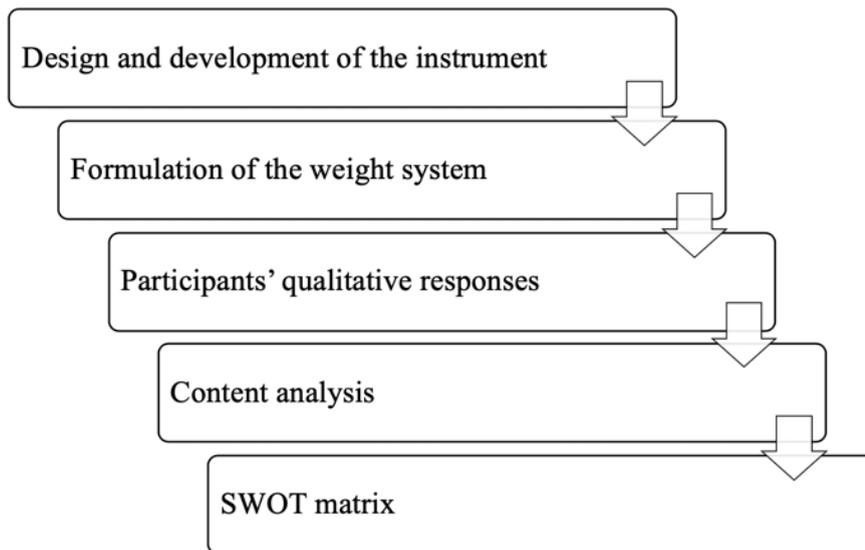
### **Data Analysis**

In this qualitative study, the authors applied an online open-ended question instrument to understand the perceptions and attitudes of pre-service bilingual primary teachers at the University of Córdoba (Spain) about their experience on designing ESoPC materials in ERLT.

To analyze the data collected, the grounded-theory scheme was followed to establish the different categories and topics; then, content analysis was applied; finally, a manual SWOT analysis (which stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats; Samejima, et al., 2006) was created. Content analysis was employed as it is “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context” (Krippendorff, 1980, p. 21) that “uses a set of procedures to make valid inferences from text” (Weber, 1990, p. 9). Moreover, in order to determine the positive or negative mood of the qualitative responses, text processing in the form of content analysis was required. Regarding the SWOT analysis, it must be taken into account that strengths and weaknesses are the internal (and thus controllable) factors that support and hinder systems, organizations or plans to achieve their mission, whereas

opportunities and threats are the external (and thus uncontrollable) factors that enable or not systems, organizations or plans to accomplish their mission (Dyson, 2004). Different stages of SWOT analysis were utilized in this study including: (a) data gathering, (b) content analysis, (c) classifying data into strengths, weaknesses, opportunities or threats, (d) specifying the weight of each factor, and (e) reporting the result.

The authors made a questionnaire-based system to automate SWOT analysis process, as described in Figure 2. The SWOT matrix was built upon the responses of pre-service bilingual primary teachers at the University of Córdoba (Spain). The collected qualitative data of the study were in the form of text description which needed content analysis before classifying them into the SWOT matrix.



**Figure 2. Process of data analysis. (Source: Own elaboration)**

The total of weight scores was calculated and then classified the content of each data into relevant SWOT categories: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. The Rule Model (Thamrin, & Pamungkas, 2017) was adopted to classify the factors based on the participants' responses (see Table 1).

**Table 1. Rule Model (Adapted from Thamrin, & Pamungkas (2017)).**

		Score	
		Positive	Negative
Factor	Internal	Strength	Weakness
	External	Opportunity	Threat

The authors categorized the data based on participants' responses into two categories: positive and negative. After that, the positive responses related to internal factors (that is, pre-service bilingual primary teachers' issues) were considered as 'strengths', while external factors (related to structures, facilities, administrators, policies, etc.) were considered as 'opportunities.' Similarly, negative responses related to internal factors were labelled as 'weaknesses', and

those related to external factors as ‘threats.’ In order to check the inter-rater reliability of the content analysis phase (i.e., categorizing and labelling the different responses according to the Rule Model), the authors checked the data analysis. The cross-checking procedure showed high consistency, confirming then the reliability of the analysis.

## Results

This section reports the findings of the analysis of pre-service bilingual primary teachers’ attitudes and perceptions towards the design of materials for the ESoPC approach in a context of ERLT. After analysis, the data were categorized into four categories: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Before going through the results of the study, it is necessary to point out that the SWOT matrix of this study was designed based on participating pre-service bilingual primary teachers’ point of view, which might be quite different from other groups (e.g., pre-service teachers in other contexts, in-service teachers, administrators, etc.). To illustrate the different categories, extracts taken from data gathered through the open-ended questions are referred – the researchers specified a code in brackets to each participant in the sample.

*Research Question 1: What are the strengths and opportunities of designing ESoPC materials in a context of ERLT according to pre-service bilingual primary teachers’ attitudes and perceptions?*

Findings revealed that pre-service bilingual primary teachers identified common strengths in the design of ESoPC materials in a context of ERLT. According to their reports, the participants highlighted (1) the feeling of working as real teachers, (2) the design of resources with a meaningful purpose, (3) the integration of new methodologies, (4) the necessity of thinking outside the box (specially developing imagination, creativity and originality), (5) the potential of peer-communication and telecollaboration, (6) the development of a deeper knowledge on emergency remote teaching, (7) an improved awareness about the culture, but also about the current problems that affect society, (8) an increased confidence when designing teaching resources, (9) the feeling of doing something useful, productive and necessary for the society, (10) it was a rewarding, inspiring and enriching experience, (11) the development of digital competence, linguistic competence and social competence, (12) the interesting combination of teaching English with fun activities, (13) the freedom to design the resources, and (14) the commitment with the project. Regarding these strengths, two of the participants stated:

*I found the activity about designing an educational resource for children really inspiring, as I felt like I was helping the teachers who are struggling with education nowadays. Moreover, I reckon that this experience has been an enriching experience for us as future teachers (Student 32).*

Moreover, the participants acknowledged several opportunities provided by the ESoPC approach in ERLT: (1) useful for the future, (2) development of cooperation skills, (3) increase of target students’ digital competence, (4) learning from the resources proposed by other colleagues, (5) increased awareness on the potential of technology to help children continue their education, (6) meaningful use of educational technology, (7) numerous resources and tools online can be adapted to specific situations, (8) designing and preparing activities are seen as important tasks performed by teachers in real contexts, (9) inspiring training for their future careers, (10) a different way to learn English, (11) increased responsibility, (12) enhancement

of innovation, (13) adaptation to new contexts and realities, (14) discovery of new resources and ideas, and (15) potential contact and involvement of the families. In this light:

*...teachers need to be prepared to adapt their materials in these situations (Student 24).*

*For these times, measures must be taken, and others adapted, so that children can continue learning during the time they cannot go to school. Therefore, it is necessary to design activities adapted to different ages (Student 17).*

Moreover, in the case of primary education students, who in Spain are children aged 6-12 years old, it is also very important the potentiality of involving the families in ERLT:

*...it is our responsibility to tackle with the difficulties and make children learn in an optimistic way (...). To sum up, I wholeheartedly believe that it would be great if we include families in our students' projects, as not only children, but also families, will have fun and learn the English language at the same time (Student 19).*

*Research Question 2: What are the weaknesses and threats of designing ESoPC materials in a context of ERLT according to pre-service bilingual primary teachers' attitudes and perceptions?*

Regarding the negative aspects, the participants reported several weaknesses of designing ESoPC materials in a context of ERLT, including: (1) they found it difficult to adapt the appropriate contents and language to the target group, (2) it was a demanding and challenging task, (3) they had a lack of experience when presenting their resources online (via Zoom), (4) it was difficult to choose the topic and type of resource to be developed, (5) they found technical problems, (6) online peer-communication was challenging, (7) coordination online in groups was difficult, (8) there was no face-to-face interaction, (9) the activities designed for ERLT were different from on-site activities, and (10) there were numerous tools online to use. Generally speaking, the participants emphasized the two following ideas:

*Designing activities to be done during the current situation was not as easy as it seemed, especially because they had to be adapted for children (Student 49).*

Furthermore, the participants showed their concern regarding the lack of personal (face-to-face) interaction, which made difficult both the design of the resources and the presentation of the final materials to their classmates:

*...it has been difficult to make this resource with my partner due to the lack of contact between us (Student 19).*

*Although technologies offer us a big alternative that we should be thankful for, it is not the same as working face to face. Sharing ideas, developing the resources... everything becomes harder. Something similar happens with the Zoom presentation, it was pleasant but kind of mechanic and less natural (Student 56).*

Finally, if we pay attention to the threats, the participants reported issues such as (1) the new, complex situation, (2) the lack of experience to choose, adapt or create appropriate contents for a target group, (3) the problems with the Internet connection, (4) the use of technological devices, (5) the difficulty to create original activities, (6) the loss of socioemotional engagement with the students, (7) the lack of experience collaborating online, (8) no face-to-face interaction, (9) the possible limitations of the target groups to carry out the activities on their own (potential need of help from families), (10) the necessity of easy, clear explanations, (11) the freedom to

design tasks, (12) the immeasurable number of resources online ('infoxication'), and (13) the lack of direct contact with the families. The participants pinpointed how challenging the situation derived from the global health crisis was, and the direct impact it may have in current education and in their future careers, as shown below:

*I must say that working on the distance seems quite difficult for me. If I were a real teacher, I probably wouldn't know how to adapt my classes to the situation we are living now [COVID-19 pandemic]. For those with access to the Internet it is easy, but how do we work with families that cannot handle with this type of distance education? (Student 46).*

*As it is something that has come without warning, we -students and teachers- are improvising a lot along the way and at full speed. However, it is very interesting to learn about different resources, and seeing how education does not have to be as 'traditional' as it was (Student 16).*

The SWOT matrix (Table 2) presents pre-service bilingual primary teachers' perceptions, beliefs and attitudes regarding their experience on ESoPC in ERLT.

## **Discussion**

Teachers' beliefs are essential for every teaching and learning situation and they constitute a particularly influential factor in implementing new approaches (Ferreira, & Kalaja, 2012). Consequently, the purpose of this study was to examine the beliefs, attitudes and perceptions of pre-service bilingual primary teachers' regarding their experience on discussed ESoPC materials in ERLT. Specifically, the implications related to each research question are discussed below.

To answer the first research question, 'What are the strengths and opportunities of designing ESoPC materials in a context of ERLT according to pre-service bilingual primary teachers' attitudes and perceptions?' it must be highlighted that the participants reported as the first strength that they had felt like real teachers as they had had the chance to design from scratch their own ESoPC teaching materials. This finding is in line with the previous research carried out by Bacharach and Heck (2012), who cited two essential elements that lead teacher candidates to feel like real teachers: (i) the planning process taught them to become more aware of the resources available and to be responsible for their teaching; and (ii) the real application allowed them to share leadership, responsibility, and ownership for teaching. Considering that non-probabilistic sample based on convenience was used for selecting the participants, all the respondents had previously experienced these two components, enhancing then this feeling of working like real teachers in a real ERLT situation.

**Table 2. SWOT Matrix Arranged According to Frequency.**

**Strengths**

- Feeling of real teachers
- Design of resources with a meaningful purpose
- Integration of new methodologies
- Thinking outside the box: imagination, creativity and originality
- Peer-communication and telecollaboration
- Deeper knowledge on emergency remote teaching
- Awareness about the culture, but also about the current problems that affect society
- Increased confidence when designing teaching resources
- Feeling of doing something useful, productive and necessary for the society (real resources for real children)
- Rewarding, inspiring and enriching experience
- Development of digital competence, linguistic competence and social competence
- Combination of teaching English with fun activities
- Freedom to design the resources
- Commitment with the project, which would be available online

**Opportunities**

- Useful experience for the future
- Development of cooperation skills
- Increase of students' digital competence
- Learning from the resources proposed by other colleagues
- Awareness on the potential of technology to help children continue their education
- Meaningful use of educational technology
- Numerous resources and tools online that can be adapted to specific situations
- Designing and preparing activities are seen as important tasks performed by teachers in real contexts
- Inspiring training for their future careers
- Different way to learn English
- Responsibility
- Innovation
- Adaptation to new contexts and realities
- Discovery of new resources and ideas
- Potential contact and involvement of the families

**Weaknesses**

- Using the appropriate contents and language to the target group
- Demanding and challenging task
- Lack of experience when presenting online
- Difficulty to choose the topic and type of resource to be developed
- Technical problems
- Online peer-communication
- Coordination online in groups
- No face-to-face interaction
- Different from on-site activities
- Numerous tools

**Threats**

- New, complex situation
- Lack of experience to choose, adapt or create appropriate contents for a target group
- Internet connection
- Use of technological devices
- Difficulty to create original activities
- Loss of socioemotional engagement with the students
- Lack of experience collaborating online
- No face-to-face interaction
- Possible limitations of the target groups to carry out the activities on their own (potential need of help from families)
- Explanations must be easy and clear to follow
- Freedom to design tasks (participants used to design specific activities)
- Lots of resources online ('infoxication')
- No direct contact with the families

In addition, the participants also emphasized as a strength of the experience the importance of designing resources with a meaningful purpose. In this light, it should be borne in mind that “The teachers cannot be positioned as passive users of resources: they are designers of their teaching. Moreover, design and use are strongly intertwined” (Gueudet, 2010, p. 2). This strength is directly linked to other three strengths (i.e., increased confidence in designing materials; the feeling of doing something useful, productive and necessary; and the development of the digital, linguistic and social competences) and also to several of the opportunities found by the respondents, including that it is a useful experience for the future, the increased awareness on the potential of technology to help children continue their education, the meaningful use of educational technology, and the fact that designing and preparing activities are seen as important tasks performed by teachers in real contexts. As Sert and Li (2017) stated:

*It is important that these student teachers demonstrate such knowledge at early stage as competence and confidence of working with technology is critical in integrating technology in teaching (...). Design also concerns giving instruction due to the differences in learning mode (p. 82).*

Peer-communication and telecollaboration have been identified as a strength and as a weakness of the project, probably due to the fact that it has been the first time that the participants have faced a task with no face-to-face interaction. Telecollaboration “involves engaging students in task-based interaction and collaborative exchange projects with partner-classes in other locations through online communication technologies under the guidance of their teachers” (O’Dowd, 2017, p. 38). Telecollaboration is interesting because, in contrast to other forms of distance and online learning, it is based on collaborative, active and student-centered approaches, where knowledge is constructed thanks to student interaction, and according to the participants has led to a promising opportunity: the development of cooperation skills. However, it is necessary some previous training, as the participants reported not to be familiar with online communication and telecollaboration with learning purposes or with designing teaching materials.

It is remarkable that this experience has allowed that participants to think outside the box, developing their imagination, creativity and originality, at the same time the gained a deeper knowledge on ERLT. In this light, it is necessary to emphasize that all “measures to ‘build back resilient’ and reach all learners need to understand and address the needs of marginalized groups and ensure they receive quality and full-term education” (United Nations, 2020, p. 14), a key concern of the ESoPC approach.

The second research question queried ‘What are the weaknesses and threats of designing ESoPC materials in a context of ERLT according to pre-service bilingual primary teachers’ attitudes and perceptions?’ Learners in the current study had specific instructions that required them to design ESoPC materials for the ERLT situation derived from the COVID-19 pandemic. However, they were also suffering the impact of this health crisis at all levels, and consequently the main threat to this experience has been indeed the new, complex situation they (we) were all living. This has probably led to the second most common weakness reported, which denominated the task as “demanding and challenging”. In fact, “From the onset of the pandemic, teachers were immediately tasked with implementing distance learning modalities, often without sufficient guidance, training, or resources” (United Nations, 2020, p. 14).

Focusing on the task itself, the most relevant weakness reported by the participants has been the use of appropriate contents and language to the target group, as well the difficulty to choose the topic and type of resource to develop, which are directly connected to the threat identified as lack of experience to choose, adapt or create appropriate contents for a specific target group (and even more, for distance education). This is in line with previous research on the integration of ICT into teaching practices in teacher training, where it was limited to basic level and demonstrative purposes, but where simulated tasks were underused (Aslan, & Zhu, 2016) and authentic learning experiences including how to use technology for design, collaboration and feedback are still necessary (Tondeur et al., 2012).

Another weakness referred by the participants is related to the technical problems they found when designing their materials, which is intertwined with two threats: problems or lack of Internet connection, and limited knowledge of using different technological devices and apps. In this light, the Brief *Education during COVID-19 and beyond* of the United Nations (2020) expresses particular concern:

*Teachers across the globe were largely unprepared to support continuity of learning and adapt to new teaching methodologies. (...) Even in contexts with adequate infrastructure and connectivity, many educators lack the most basic ICT skills, meaning they will likely struggle with their own ongoing professional development, let alone with facilitating quality distance learning (United Nations, 2020, p. 15).*

Another weakness that is directly connected to threats is the numerous tools and resources available online, which may lead to two types of threats: on the one hand, the difficulty to create original activities; on the other, the ‘infocination’ derived from the enormous number of resources online. These findings, however, differ from Leoste et al. (2019), who identified the need of adaptation and validation practices of materials, that is, the co-creation of learning designs to be applicable into different contexts. Consequently, it is likely that the perceived weakness in our study has been derived from the fact that the participants understood that they could not adapt previous resources available online, and all their activities had to be completely original.

It should also be highlighted the importance given to the loss of socioemotional engagement with the students as a potential threat not only in the suggested task, but also in ERLT in general. This is a concern also reflected by the World Bank (2020): “These losses in cognitive domains (such as literacy, numeracy, and reasoning skills) will be easiest to quantify, but there could be costs to learning in socioemotional areas as well” (p. 12). In all cases, but more specially in difficult times, “Social and emotional learning (SEL) provides schools with a viable strategy to address students’ anxieties, stress, and self-esteem, while improving their academic outcomes” (World Bank, 2020, p. 25).

These findings should allow teacher educators to rethink teacher training: “The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted that both initial and in-service teacher education are in need of reform to better train teachers in new methods of education delivery” (United Nations, 2020, p. 15).

Despite the challenges, that is, weaknesses and threats, it is necessary to pinpoint that

*...these changes have also highlighted that the promising future of learning, and the accelerated changes in modes of delivering quality education, cannot be separated from the imperative of leaving no one behind. This is true for children and youth affected by*

*a lack of resources or enabling environment to access learning. It is true for the teaching profession and their need for better training in new methods of education delivery, as well as support (United Nations, 2020, p. 2).*

## **Conclusion**

In this paper, we attempted to address what we perceive to be a challenge but also an opportunity in pre-service teacher training: the design of EFL teaching materials in an Emergency Remote Language Teaching (ERLT) context. We did this first by providing a general overview of the connection of technology and language learning and teaching, taking into account ERLT, and second by suggesting English for Social Purposes and Cooperation (ESoPC) as an approach that can be useful for the design of materials for emergencies and crises. By addressing the design of ESoPC materials as both the process and the product of pre-service bilingual teacher training in the real context of the health crisis due to COVID-19, we hope to have brought new insight into EFL materials design in ERLT situations.

The results of this study confirm that pre-service bilingual primary teachers had the opportunity of engaging in the design of socially and culturally responsive EFL materials that led to a very positive response, developing different types of competences (e.g., linguistic, social and digital) but also increasing their awareness on the role of education in emergency situations.

*Education is not only a fundamental human right. It is an enabling right with direct impact on the realization of all other human rights. It is a global common good and a primary driver of progress across all 17 Sustainable Development Goals as a bedrock of just, equal, inclusive peaceful societies. When education systems collapse, peace, prosperous and productive societies cannot be sustained (United Nations, 2020, p. 3).*

The question today is not only whether teacher educators should engage pre-service bilingual primary teachers in designing teaching materials for real contexts and situations, but how to develop the necessary competences to face the continuous changes in our globalized society, including emergencies and crises that may disrupt the normal functioning of a community or a society. In regard to the implications of our research for teacher training, we would suggest that preparing pre-service teachers for designing and implementing successful ESoPC materials for ERLT situations needs to involve the development of a series of skills and competences (i.e., teacher digital competence, intercultural awareness, (tele)collaboration, social responsibility, creativity, flexibility). In this light, these competences that pre-service teachers need to develop unavoidably involve an ability to articulate to their colleagues the learning objectives and teaching approaches, at the same time they provide their peers with an openness to adapt their resources to different contexts.

Moreover, there are also tasks that may be more appropriate to certain pre-service teacher profiles (e.g., guided tasks, different experience with educational technology). This would suggest that pre-service teachers should stay in direct contact with their peers as to how they are experiencing the process and then adapt tasks appropriately.

Nonetheless, the findings presented in this paper should be interpreted in the context of three limitations. First, due to the nature of an exploratory study, as a starting point, only pre-service teachers from one university were considered as target population, and therefore the findings may not be applicable to participants from different backgrounds or contexts. Future research should consider then recruiting participants from different institutions and sociocultural

backgrounds in order to perform comparisons with the current research. Second, the study is only qualitative, and quantitative data could complement the qualitative results, as it may warrant more potential independent variables. Finally, the qualitative findings were only based on self-reported data, so they may be affected by respondents' subjective opinions about the phenomena studied. For this reason, future studies should also consider obtaining information through additional sources (e.g., tests, questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, observations) in order to obtain more reliable data.

After revealing all the challenges and opportunities regarding the design of materials following the ESoPC approach for ERLT situations, further research is needed to define the concept, as well as to propose strategies that may lead to an improvement in language teaching in emergency situations.

## About the authors

**Cristina A. Huertas-Abril** is Associate Professor of English Studies at the University of Córdoba (Spain), where she teaches and conducts research on foreign language teaching, teacher training, bilingual education, and Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL). Her research has appeared in *Teaching English with Technology*, *Educación XXI*, *Technology, Knowledge and Learning*, *Revista Complutense de Educación*, and edited volumes.

**Francisco Javier Palacios-Hidalgo** is a PhD student at the University of Córdoba (Spain), where he teaches and conducts research on second language teaching and learning, bilingual education and educational technologies. His research has appeared in *Research in Comparative and International Education*, *RIED – Revista Iberoamericana de Educación a Distancia*, *Technology, Knowledge and Learning*, among others.

**María Elena Gómez-Parra** is Associate Professor of English Studies at the University of Córdoba (Spain), where she teaches and conducts research on Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), bilingual education, intercultural education and teacher training. Her research has appeared in *Porta Linguarum*, *Cultura y Educación*, *Teaching English with Technology*, and edited volumes.

## Acknowledgment

This paper was partially supported by the Spanish Ministry of Education (Resolución de 5 de diciembre de 2017, de la Secretaría de Estado de Educación, Formación Profesional y Universidades, por la que se convocan ayudas para la formación de profesorado universitario, de los Subprogramas de Formación y de Movilidad incluidos en el Programa Estatal de Promoción del Talento y su Empleabilidad, en el marco del Plan Estatal de Investigación Científica y Técnica y de Innovación 2013-2016).

## To cite this article:

Huertas-Abril, C.A., Palacios-Hidalgo, F.J. & Gómez-Parra, M.E. (2021). Designing materials for emergency remote language teaching contexts: a qualitative study of pre-service teachers' experiences. *Teaching English as a Second Language Electronic Journal (TESL-EJ)*, 25(2). <https://tesl-ej.org/pdf/ej98/a11.pdf>

## References

- Anderson, L. W., & Krathwohl, D. R. (2001). *A taxonomy for learning, teaching, and assessing: a revision of Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives*. Longman.
- Andrade, M. S. (2016). Global expansion and English language learning. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 2016(173), 75–85. <https://doi.org/10.1002/he.20181>.
- Aslan, A., & Zhu, C. (2016). Influencing factors and integration of ICT into teaching practices of pre-service and starting teachers. *International Journal of Research in Education and Science (IJRES)*, 2(2), 359-370.
- Bacharach, N. L., & Heck, T. W. (2012). Voices from the field: multiple perspectives on a coteaching in student teaching model. *The Renaissance Group*, 1, 49-61.
- Charmaz, K. (1990). Discovering chronic illness: using Grounded Theory. *Social Science & Medicine*, 30(11), 1161-1172.
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing Grounded Theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. SAGE.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2017). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). SAGE.
- Dyson, R. G. (2004). Strategic development and SWOT analysis at the University of Warwick. *European Journal of Operational Research*, 152, 631-640.
- European Parliament, & Council of the European Union. (2006). Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning (2006/962/EC). *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 394/10, 30.12.2006. <https://bit.ly/2C3jiSh>.
- Ferreira, A. M., & Kalaja, P. (2012). Beliefs in second language acquisition: teacher. *The Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics*. Wiley Online Library. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405198431.wbeal0083>.
- Fouz-González, J. (2019). Podcast-based pronunciation training: enhancing FL learners' perception and production of fossilised segmental features. *ReCALL*, 31(2), 150–169. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0958344018000174>.
- Giannini, S. (2020, 6 June). *Build back better: Education must change after COVID-19 to meet the climate crisis*. UNESCO. <https://bit.ly/31nHg3m>.
- Glasser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Aldine.
- Gueudet, G. (2010). 'Lived resources' and mathematics teachers professional development. *5<sup>th</sup> European Workshop on Mathematical & Scientific e-Contents*. HAL. <https://bit.ly/34qfvdD>.
- Gutiérrez, I., & Serrano, J. L. (2016). Evaluation and development of digital competence in future primary school teachers at the University of Murcia. *Journal of New Approaches in Educational Research*, 5(1), 51–56. <https://doi.org/10.7821/naer.2016.1.152>.

- Hendricks, C. (2017). *Improving schools through action research. A reflective practice approach* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Pearson.
- Hodges, C., Moore, S., Lockee, B., Trust, T., y Bond, A. (2020). The difference between emergency remote teaching and online learning. *EDUCAUSE Review*. EDUCAUSE. <https://bit.ly/2DwKOYM>.
- Huertas-Abril, C. A. (2018). Inglés para fines sociales y de cooperación (IFSyC): Contextualización y justificación. In C. A. Huertas-Abril & M. E. Gómez-Parra (Eds.), *Inglés para fines sociales y de cooperación. Guía para la elaboración de materiales* (pp. 9–24). Graó.
- Huertas-Abril, C. A. (2020). Implementation of Cooperative Learning Strategies to Create 3D-Videos in EFL Teacher Training. In L. N. Makewa (Ed.), *Theoretical and Practical Approaches to Innovation in Higher Education* (pp. 17–41). IGI Global. <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-7998-1662-1.ch002>.
- Huertas-Abril, C. A., & Gómez-Parra, M. E. (Eds.). (2018). *Inglés para fines sociales y de cooperación. Guía para la elaboración de materiales*. Graó.
- Jenkins, J., Baker, W., & Dewey, M. (Eds.). (2018). *The Routledge handbook of English as a lingua franca*. Routledge.
- Krippendorff, K. (1980). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodologies*. SAGE.
- Leoste, J., Tammets, K., & Ley, T. (2019). Co-creation of learning designs: Analyzing knowledge appropriation in teacher training programs. *EC-TEL (Practitioner Proceedings)*. <https://bit.ly/2QbQWZB>.
- Mertens, D. M. (2014). *Research and evaluation in education and psychology: Integrating diversity with quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods*. SAGE.
- Moore, J. L., Dickson-Deane, C., & Galyen, K. (2011). e-learning, online learning, and distance learning environments: Are they the same? *Internet and Higher Education, 14*, 129–135. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iheduc.2010.10.001>.
- Moskal, P., Dziuban, C., & Hartman, J. (2013). Blended learning: A dangerous idea? *Internet and Higher Education, 18*, 15–23. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iheduc.2012.12.001>.
- O'Dowd, R. (2017). Exploring the impact of telecollaboration in initial teacher education: The EVALUATE project. *The EuroCALL Review, 25*(2), 38-41
- Olney, W. W. (2017). English proficiency and labor market performance: Evidence from the economics profession. *Economic Inquiry, 55*(1), 202–222. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ecin.12370>.
- Palacios-Hidalgo, F. J. (2020). An Approach for Providing LGBTI+ Education and Bridging the Language Gap: Integrating ESoPC into EFL Teacher Training. In C. A. Huertas-Abril & M. E. Gómez-Parra (Eds.), *International Approaches to Bridging the Language Gap* (pp. 195–213). IGI Global. <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-7998-1219-7.ch012>
- Palacios-Hidalgo, F. J., Gómez-Parra, M. E., & Huertas-Abril, C. A. (2020). Digital and Media Competences: Key Competences for EFL Teachers. *Teaching English with Technology, 20*(1), 43–59. <https://bit.ly/2GHgDML>.

- Patton, M. Q. (2003). *Qualitative evaluation checklist. Evaluation checklists project*. <https://bit.ly/2DSPDvn>.
- Pidgeon, N., & Henwood, K. (1997). Using Grounded Theory in psychological research. In N. Hayes (Ed.), *Doing Qualitative Analysis in Psychology* (pp. 245-273). Psychology Press.
- Redondo, B., Cózar-Gutiérrez, R., González-Calero, J. A., & Sánchez-Ruiz, R. (2020). Integration of augmented reality in the teaching of English as a foreign language in Early Childhood Education. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 48, 147–155. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-019-00999-5>.
- Samejima, M., Shimizu, Y., Akiyoshi, M., & Komoda, N. (2006). SWOT analysis support tool for verification of business strategy. In *IEEE International Conference on Computational Cybernetics* (pp. 1–4). IEEE. <https://doi.org/10.1109/ICCCYB.2006.305700>.
- Sert, O., & Li, L. (2017). A qualitative study on CALL knowledge and materials design: Insights from pre-service EFL teachers. *International Journal of Computer-Assisted Language Learning and Teaching*, 7(3), 73-87. 1 <https://doi.org/0.4018/IJCALLT.2017070105>.
- Thamrin, H., & Pamungkas, E. W. (2017). A rule based SWOT analysis application: A case study for Indonesian higher education institution. *Procedia Computer Science*, 116, 144-150. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.procs.2017.10.056>.
- Tondeur, J., van Braak, J., Sang, G., Voogt, J., Fisser, P., & Ottenbreit-Leftwich, A. (2012). Preparing preservice teachers to integrate technology in education: A synthesis of qualitative evidence. *Computers & Education*, 59, 134-144. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2011.10.009>.
- UNESCO, & IESALC. (2020). *COVID-19 and higher education: Today and tomorrow. Impact analysis, policy responses and recommendations*. UNESCO & IESALC. <https://bit.ly/34TOSvu>.
- UNESCO. (2020). *Global monitoring of school closures caused by COVID-19*. UNESCO. <https://bit.ly/3fDvcQq>.
- United Nations. (2020). *Policy brief: Education during COVID-19 and beyond. August 2020*. <https://bit.ly/326ohKZ>.
- Weber, R. P. (1990). *Basic content analysis* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). SAGE.
- World Bank. (2020). *The COVID-19 pandemic: Shocks to education and policy responses*. World Bank Group. <https://bit.ly/2Qe1ffu>.

Copyright rests with authors. Please cite TESL-EJ appropriately.