

GRAHAM STANLEY interview summary

[6: 10] – (Summarised the project): Remote Teaching Project managed by the British Council and Plan Ceibal was set up in Uruguay because there was lack of trained and qualified English teachers for primary school children from grade 4-6. There were places that primary English teachers were scarce, the project was developed to fill the gap through video conferencing classes. This was introduced in 2012.

[13:34]- the program started on primary schools since that's where English teachers were scarce. Plan Ceibal also started piloting classes in secondary schools too. But in secondary schools, because there are English teachers, the program is slightly different. They do it not for the sake of shortage of English teachers just only for the positive impact of the teachers' presence in conversation classes once a week.

[15:23] Willy is a quality Manager. His role has two functions: one is to ensure the high-quality teaching of the project through observing the teachers and report back to the teaching providers. The other function of his role is to help the teachers, through providing training and mentoring. There is an online course specifically written for teachers in this project which started 4 years ago. This course is currently splitted into two one is before the teachers start teaching and the other is after they start teaching. There is also face-to-face training and a continuing professional development.

[22:12] for the video conferencing the remote teacher has to create good relationship with the classroom teacher. For each 45 minute class, there is an extra 15 minute given for 'coordination with the classroom teacher'. This involves the remote teacher meeting the classroom teacher through video conferencing using what's up, skype or facebook. This will help the teachers to get to know each other and exchange information.

1 GS: what we built into the project is we pay the
2 teachers. its not a lot of time for that. but
3 the 45 minute class for each 45 minute class
4 we pay the teachers an extra 15 minutes for
5 what we call coordination with the classroom
6 teacher. and you know at the beginning of the
7 year that coordination is usually and probably
8 more than 15 minutes a week. because they are
9 establishing contact with them. and then as the
10 year goes on it can be 15 minutes. it can be
11 shorter. but what that involves is the remote
12 teacher meeting with the classroom teacher through
13 video conferencing skype whatsapp or on
14 facebook through email chatting etc. there
15 are a number of different ways of doing it.
16 and each of the pair the teams of teachers find
17 their the way thats most comfortable to them.
18 the time the way that fits in with their
19 lifestyle what else is happening etc. although
20 you know we know that the best way of doing it is
21 actually for them to meet in real time through
22 either skype or zoom or other video conferencing
23 system. to be able to you know get to know each
24 other and exchange information about the class
25 the lessons to go through it. and establish a
26 relationship as well really.

[24:20] high definition video conferencing equipment is used in both ends for a good quality. This helps for the remote teacher to interact with students by zooming in the camera at the other end. So, the use of Camera in both ends is one aspect of the program. The remote teachers need to act, move and use body language just the way they would teach in a classroom physically. There is this expectation of the video teaching to resemble normal classroom teaching. The teachers need to know how to make an eye contact by looking at the camera but not on the screen.

27 SM: yes. so what about the best practice in terms of
28 using you know being a remote teacher and using
29 the video interface? what could you give us a
30 couple of examples of what youve kind of learned
31 or the teams learned over that period of time?
32 about how thats different maybe from say team
33 teaching in a physical space?
34 GS: yes. well of course i mean youve got the idea of
35 the camera. so you have to have a presence. you
36 have to be aware of camera aware. and have an
37 understanding of how you appear on the large screen
38 which is placed on the wall of the classroom.
39 sometimes its not 42 inch screen. so we use high
40 definition video conferencing high end video
41 conferencing equipment. fiber optic line. so the
42 quality is very you know as good as it can be.
43 SM: is that in schools as well? or on the delivery
44 end?
45 GS: no on both ends. we use the kind of video
46 conferencing equipment that you typically find in
47 businesses that use to reduce the need for people
48 to actually meet or anew this as well to travel. so
49 the reason for that well because on the remote
50 teaching end you have the teachers have the ability
51 to recognize understand and get to know the
52 students. if you use skype with a class of 30 to
53 40 students it will be impossible i think for
54 example for the teachers to actually distinguish
55 a lot of differences between the individual
56 students. whereas if youre conferencing you can
57 zoom in to students. or if you wanted to if you
58 ask the student to say something you can zoom in
59 to that student. you can take control of the camera
60 on the other end and zoom in. and they get the
61 feeling that you know you are looking at them. so
62 theres all of that aspect of using the camera at
63 the other end using the camera on this end to
64 manage. not plugged in to the conferencing
65 equipment for presentations and displays. theres
66 the whole presence on screen required with young
67 learners requires the teacher to do the same kind
68 of things they would do in a young learner class.
69 so not long activities lots of different lots of
70 variety of routines. you know variation of body
71 language. so you dont want what were doing what

72 im doing now sitting down being. is exactly what
73 you dont want a young learner teacher to do
74 in these classes. to replicate as much
75 as possible the experience that you would want
76 to see in a face to face young learner classroom
77 especially a primary classroom. so you know youd
78 want the teacher to stand up to dance to sing to
79 exaggerate their body language. to vary their
80 voice. and using a camera you need to do that it
81 needs to be more exaggerated. so you need to be a
82 bit almost histrionic. you need to be a bit of an
83 actor. you can as a camera people have bring in
84 puppets. they wear you know hats. and they play
85 with the fact that you know they can disappear and
86 appear on the camera. things like that. and then
87 because the screens and the cameras are unlike a
88 laptop youve got the camera is at a different
89 distance to the screen. what the teachers need to
90 know is that rather than look at the screen they
91 need to look at the camera. notice when im talking
92 to you but if im looking at the image of me on the
93 screen for example. im not making eye contact with
94 you. whereas if i look at the camera. it may be
95 subtle difference on a laptop but when you have
96 video conferencing equipment with the distance
97 between the screen and the camera being more
98 substantial it would be is a big difference.
99 thats the things you feel it when you observe
100 classes in the classroom in the schools. you can
101 see when a teacher actually is trying to make eye
102 contact with the students. and it really does make
103 a difference. so there is that. then you know all
104 of the usual things that you would expect in a
105 normal face to face classroom become more important
106 in a video conference mediated classroom. so
107 getting to know the students.

[29:03] classroom management is a challenge but some remote teachers even overcome that through the good relationship they have with the classroom teacher.

[30:13] we don't have enough examples captured in video. Especially for the online courses, we needed better real examples of video clips. But because we were busy and also are required to prepare a lot for the recording especially in regard to ethical issues, we haven't done a lot. We have some. There were some videos recorded by Plan Ceibal for another project but we can't use those.

[33:43] we have some video clips which we use for standardization with the quality management. We have clips which shows good and not so good practices. But what we took as good practice at the beginning of the project has changed. For example, the issue of L1 can be mentioned in the project. The remote teachers have to establish a relationship with classroom teachers through L1 (Spanish) but the with the students', the use of English should be maximized. So for the remote teacher, there was a lot to control.

108 SM: are there any feedback from the trainees about
109 that use of video?

110 GS: yes. no i think one of the you know we do use
111 videos for lots of different reasons videos of
112 our classes. so one of the things we do is
113 were developing were doing more of this now. sort
114 of standardization of remote obvservation for our
115 quality managers and all of the people involved in
116 observing these classes and teachers. so we have
117 videos that we have of teachers teaching that we
118 use that show both good and not so good practice
119 for that. but also some of the clips we have are
120 out of date and weve removed some of them. but some
121 of them weve kept in. and i think what weve what
122 we understood as good practice at the beginning of
123 the project has changed.

124 SM: has it? yes thats interesting.

125 GS: our opinion of what good remote teaching is has
126 changed a lot since you know since i started just
127 under five years ago.

128 SM: can you give me an example of something that
129 previously was thought of good practice but maybe
130 not so much now? and maybe something that you
131 didnt realize that youve realized that is good
132 practice?

133 GS: yes. i think the one of the things we always
134 struggle with is the use of ll for example.
135 so its a particularly thorny issue in this project
136 because all as i said before the remote teachers
137 all have to establish a relationship with the
138 classroom teacher in ll and in spanish.
139 but theyre expected to maximize the use of english
140 in the class with the students. now there are all
141 sorts of different dynamics that go on as in you
142 know when weve tried to understand what the best
143 practice is. so we dont really want the remote
144 teachers speaking much spanish. but weve moved
145 away from that. at the beginning of the. its
146 actually for the first couple of classes if they
147 dont use any spanish at all then it really does
148 effect negatively the class. so i think well thats
149 something were still exploring but we do know.

150 SM: so theres a kind of the outcome of that is that
151 really youre encouraging people to use more
152 spanish in the early stages. is that right?

153 GS: yes. its a difficult thing to do because you
154 have the problem in that if the teacher wants to
155 communicate with the classroom teacher to tell
156 them something to do then they really need on
157 most occasions to tell them in spanish. but they
158 should really they need to have it in mind that
159 when they are addressing the students they
160 should use english. and its difficult cognitively
161 for the teachers to understand and moderate
162 their when to use spanish when to use english.
163 and keep an eye on what theyre supposed to be

164 teaching the technology etc. theres a lot of
165 things to manage that you wouldnt have when
166 you normally. so its and there are routines
167 and habits that some teachers get into is that
168 thats one of the things about observing
169 teachers is that youre able to pick up on habits
170 and routines and suggest changes.
171 and then they can tell when it isnt and they arent
172 taking place because the students if they dont
173 practice well is presented practiced in the video
174 conferencing class. then a lot of them forget it
175 by the end by the next week. so thats problematic.

[38:22] The other technical aspect of the program is the use of Microphone. Ideally, the microphone shouldn't be moved but while videoing a teacher in action, she monitored a pair work by zooming-in and asking the classroom teacher to move and put the microphone closer to the pair. Because of that the remote teacher was able to monitor the pair work since she can clearly listen to what they were saying. Since then moving the mics were considered as good practise.

[40:50] about teacher training documentation- there are quality management handbooks. There was a methodology handbook by the lesson plan writers but now it has been changed. It was generic written not only for the teachers but also for policy makers (explained the process). Regular revision and on-going process to make it better.

[44:15] good thing is students show progress.

[45:40] video content for the local teachers to use are available (songs, videos related to pronunciation) for teachers. But it is difficult to get the insight of what goes on in the classroom (the video conferencing class). There are mentors who follow up that; they work closely with the classroom teachers. There are some teachers who misunderstand their role so there are challenges of that kind. We try and tackle the problems to improve the practice.

176 SM: you know that in the youve got the initial
177 lesson and then youve got the two follow up
178 sessions that the local teacher manages. is there
179 any video content thats additional to the sort of
180 synchronous stuff that the local teachers can use
181 as a reminder in those two sessions? Yes.
182 GS: yes yes. songs stories special related to
183 pronunciation etc. theyre all available for the
184 teacher to use. what we dont have is because
185 of the politics involved its very difficult as
186 i said before to know what goes on in those classes
187 we call them b and c with a being the video
188 conferencing class. its very difficult for the
189 british council to get an insight into just how
190 they work. ive had the opportunity of observing
191 those classes. and we do have there plan ceibal
192 have a team of what they call mentors who work
193 closely with the classroom teachers. and they
194 observe them as well and feedback on whats
195 happening. and you get everything from teachers
196 who follow to the letter the lessons that are.

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197 and they take them very seriously. to others
198 just do what they think is necessary. or they
199 just do something that they remember. there
200 were examples of some teachers who actually
201 they you know because they do nuns they
202 actually perhaps may be teaching the children
203 you know may be giving providing. theyre not
204 supposed to be their models for pronunciation
205 etc for the children. and we try and make that
206 make that clear. but there are some teachers
207 who end up thinking thats what they have to
208 do. and they end up being not very good
209 models for the students unfortunately. so the
210 challenges in this type of teaching.

[48:00] the mentors are experienced Uruguayan English teachers who are responsible to establish relationship with teachers to ensure the correct implementation of the program. They follow-up teachers progress, the ongoing activities and suggest improvements. There are 80 mentors, looks like a considerable number but with 80,000 students and 3,500 classes a week, it's never enough. They limit their visit as a result.

[50:50] for more on the video practise insight, speak to Director of the language Institute in (Cordoba?) Argentina.

[52:44] what they are looking from British University: now that the program is introduced in secondary schools and it is different from primary schools. The reasons for running the program there is different from primary school since they already have English teachers. One is because the primary level program is now matured, there are students entering secondary school with a higher level of English than they would otherwise have, and the secondary school system has not changed to cope with that. So as a solution, there is once a week conversation base classes by a teacher other than the classroom teacher who is ideally outside their environment and speaks only English. So we offered for Plan Ceibal to contact universities in the UK to bring teachers to Uruguay for this since they struggled to find this kind of teacher.

SM: UK universities may not be interested to be partners if there is no funding. wondering if language schools would go for that than universities?

[60:59] it is not that there is no funding. There will be a payment for the teacher and the equipment plan ceibal will buy ... it is just that Plan ceibal has limits when they pay and it's not really a lot of money.

[63:21] talking about a small institute in London on the project (unable to listen some part of it)

SM: talking about using a former Hornby scholar to study the area for PHD through funding his study.

[67:45] currently looking for possibilities. The aim is to keep cost low. We might find some organizations who will be interested to involve. Some have already contacted me.