

4 English Remote Teaching in Drawings: Stories of Teacher Resilience in Brazilian State Schools

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1 Introduction

Teachers' journeys are unstable and uncertain (Britzman, 2007; Freire, 2016; Sinner, 2013; Vinz, 1997). As Vinz highlights (1997: 139), they are marked by 'continuous reformulations of the self', in which teachers confront the uncertainties of the profession. English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers deal with uncertainties throughout their careers, such as teaching a language other than their mother tongue, adapting to educational guidelines, moving to new positions, and so on. However, no teacher ever expected to teach remotely in a pandemic.

Language teachers worldwide had to deal with the abrupt shift to remote teaching with little online teaching experience and all the stress this caused (see MacIntyre *et al.*, 2020; Moorhouse & Kohnke, 2021; Yan & Wang, 2022; Yuan & Liu, 2021). Brazilian EFL teachers were no different. They had to reinvent their practices overnight, while coping with the pandemic in their personal lives. Before vaccines were finally made available in Brazil, many feared for their lives. Teaching under these conditions was a huge challenge. During the first year of the pandemic, Brazilian EFL teachers scrambled to teach remotely without prior experience (see Braga *et al.*, 2021; Có *et al.*, 2020; Coscarelli, 2020; Ludovico *et al.*, 2021; Ribeiro, 2020). In the words of Ribeiro (2020: 115): 'there was no time for planning. There was no time for crying. There was no time to rehearse replies to the rudeness of intolerant, ignorant and abrupt fathers/mothers.' I, personally, had never taught a module completely online. Nor had the state school EFL teachers that participated in this study.

Teaching English in Brazilian state schools demands much resilience, given students' lack of interest and the low status of the language in the curriculum (see Assis-Peterson & Cox, 2007; British Council, 2015; James

& Brandão, 2019). The uncertainty of teaching remotely compounded the already existing challenges. In short, I take resilience to describe the identity-making process shaped by stories of navigating challenges. Exploring teacher resilience helps second language teacher education researchers and educators understand how teachers persist, complementing studies of attrition and burnout (Beltman *et al.*, 2011; Gu & Day, 2007; Mansfield *et al.*, 2012). Educational researchers have been arguing for the need to build teachers' resilience in teacher education programmes (Day & Gu, 2014; Mansfield *et al.*, 2012).

Taking the form of a visual narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), this study explores EFL teachers' stories of remote teaching through the lens of teacher resilience. I address the following research questions:

- (1) What challenges did teachers encounter?
- (2) How did they respond to them?
- (3) How were they shaped as professionals by this experience?

I analyse EFL teachers' drawings depicting stories of teaching remotely in the first months of the pandemic, contextualised by recorded conversations. These drawings thus act as visual journals. They are my primary source of stories, operating as an arts-based elicitation method (see Bagnoli, 2009; Rose, 2016): drawings previously produced by teachers were followed by recorded conversations to help me understand their depicted experiences.

This chapter is organised as follows. In Section 2, I give a theoretical background of teacher resilience and review studies on remote language teaching in Brazil. In Section 3, I introduce narrative inquiry which serves as the methodology for this study. In Section 4, I present my findings based on the visual narratives of two EFL teachers. I conclude in Section 5 by discussing my findings in the context of second language teacher education and reflecting on social justice and equity issues.

2 Background to the Study

2.1 Teacher resilience as an identity-making process

Studies of resilience strive to 'understand the ways that teachers manage and sustain their motivation and commitment in times of change' (Gu & Day, 2007: 1302), with an emphasis on thriving over merely surviving (Beltman & Mansfield, 2018; Beltman *et al.*, 2011; Day & Gu, 2014; Gu & Day, 2007, 2013; Mansfield *et al.*, 2012; Naidoo & Wagner, 2020). Such studies also highlight the link between teacher resilience and self-efficacy, that is, teachers' belief in their own ability to effectively carry out their teaching tasks and achieve desired outcomes: the self-efficacy that comes with resilience improves teaching quality, and, serving as role

models, teachers may also foster the resilience of their students (Day & Gu, 2014; Gu & Day, 2007). Overall, teacher resilience involves maintaining ‘equilibrium and a sense of commitment and agency in the everyday worlds in which teachers teach’ (Gu & Day, 2013: 26).

Researchers identify teacher resilience with a capacity. Beltman (2015: 21), for example, defines *teacher resilience* as ‘the capacity of teachers to navigate challenges, the process of interaction between individual teachers and their professional contexts, and the outcome of a teacher experiencing commitment, growth and wellbeing’. Gu and Day (2013: 22) define it as teachers’ ‘everyday capacity to sustain their educational purposes and successfully manage the unavoidable uncertainties which are inherent in the practice of being a teacher’. Resilience depends on the teacher’s individual circumstances, as well as their social and professional relationships, and may change over time (Beltman & Mansfield, 2018; Beltman *et al.*, 2011; Day & Gu, 2014; Gu & Day, 2007, 2013; Hiver, 2018; Kostoulas & Lämmerer, 2018; Mansfield *et al.*, 2012; Naidoo & Wagner, 2020).

Within language teaching, James and Brandão (2019) used narrative inquiry to explore early career English teachers’ stories of resilience in Brazil and the UK, identifying and comparing the risk and protective factors shaping their experiences. The study draws on the understanding of *teacher resilience* as ‘a complex, idiosyncratic and cyclical construct, involving dynamic processes of interaction over time between person and environment’ (Beltman *et al.*, 2011: 195). It highlights similarities between countries, such as the lack of institutional support (as a risk factor) and a strong sense of commitment (as a protective factor), and self-reflection and wellbeing care practices as coping strategies. It also exposes country-based particularities concerning challenges: in Brazil, teachers needed to teach subjects other than English because of the few English classes available in the curriculum, while in the UK, the lack of self-efficacy was frequently raised.

Using interviews and reflective journal data, Fan *et al.* (2021) followed Chinese foreign language teachers and investigated the resilience strategies they developed to cope with their challenges. The study draws on Day and Gu’s (2014) concept of teacher resilience as the dynamic, relational, developmental positive adaptation to professional uncertainties. It provides an overview of risk factors within different sources: individual, classroom, institution, and national reform policy regarding FL teaching and learning. For instance, teachers had to cope with feelings of isolation, students’ lack of interest in a foreign language, heavy workload and a sense of insecurity concerning reform policy. In response, the teachers motivated students, sought help from peers and invested in their professional learning.

Lu and Zhu (2022) interviewed Confucius Institute teachers to understand how they exercised their resilience during the pandemic. The study draws on Gu and Day’s (2013) notion of teacher resilience as the capacity

to manage the unavoidable uncertainties that permeate teaching. It identifies challenges similar to many teaching professionals, such as adapting teaching materials for online classes and dealing with well-being issues. It also highlights challenges specific to Chinese teaching, such as the lack of online alternatives for teaching stroke writing and the increasingly polarised perception of the country. The teachers exercised their resilience by learning how to be resourceful in online teaching, finding opportunities to learn with peers and focusing on their professional duties. In fact, ‘co-learning, mutual support and solidarity play a significant role in enabling teacher resilience’ (Lu & Zhu, 2022: 17).

In this chapter, I adopt a narrative perspective on teacher resilience. Thus, resilience will appear in the stories that shape teachers’ identities. I draw on Clandinin and Huber’s (2005: 44) understanding of a *teacher’s identity* as ‘a unique embodiment of his/her stories to live by, stories shaped by the landscapes past and present in which s/he lives and works’. Resilience forms part of an identity-making process as teachers navigate challenges and uncertainties in their profession. A similar approach has been used by Clandinin *et al.* (2015: 1) in regard to teacher attrition (the process of leaving teaching), from which I have drawn inspiration. This chapter contributes to the existing literature not only by addressing teacher resilience from a narrative conceptual perspective, but also by exploring stories of resilience during remote teaching through visual means: it provides snapshots of Brazilian EFL teachers’ resilience in the early stages of remote teaching.

2.2 Teaching languages remotely in Brazil

As a result of the pandemic, remote teaching had to be implemented at short notice. Here, I summarise a number of studies on remote language teaching in Brazil from this period. Braga *et al.* (2021) used a quasi-structured questionnaire to understand how digital technologies were integrated into the practices of language teachers across Brazil. Có *et al.* (2020) developed a mixed-method approach to analyse language teachers’ experiences of using online tools during the pandemic. Coscarelli (2020) discussed the improvisation of remote teaching in Brazil as she reflected on desperate help requests received from teachers. Ludovico *et al.* (2021) carried out a longitudinal study focusing on the narratives of a private school English teacher describing her first months of remote teaching. Ribeiro (2020) discussed teachers’ struggles using online tools during remote teaching.

These studies highlight recurring issues for remote language teaching in its initial stages in Brazil. Pre-existing deficiencies in technology, skills and IT support were exacerbated. Reliable internet access was problematic for both teachers and students, particularly in the state sector. Computer equipment was likewise deficient. Thus, the IT infrastructure

was not fit for this purpose. On top of this, teachers themselves were mostly inexperienced in integrating technology into their practice.

The studies also expose the entire education system's ill-preparation to transition to online teaching when the pandemic arrived. Understandably, no prior plans had been drawn up for such an unprecedented event. Teachers reported overwhelming workloads as they tried to readapt their practice online at short notice. They had to learn to use online platforms, mostly without IT support. Remote classes were unfamiliar for teachers and students alike. Often students were simply invisible, either because of poor internet coverage or because the students switched off their cameras. Classroom interaction was therefore greatly impoverished, and many of the teaching methods that worked in face-to-face settings translated poorly online. Sitting in front of computer screens for hours on end was tiring. The abrupt uncertainty of this new situation was considerably stressful for teachers.

However, the trauma of teaching during the pandemic has potential positive outcomes, as Coscarelli (2020) highlights: teachers were afforded opportunities to experiment with technology, revisit the curriculum, and reconsider how students are grouped or evaluated. Going forward, technology in classrooms has been normalised. But how and at what cost? By exploring remote teaching through a teacher resilience lens, this chapter addresses these issues.

3 Research Methodology

This study takes the form of a narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). EFL teachers' experiences of exercising their resilience are studied as storied phenomena. Narrative is both the phenomenon (the stories participants live and tell) and the methodology (a way of understanding experience). Analysis involves identifying narrative threads, 'particular plotlines that threaded or wove over time and place', in order to construct participants' overall accounts (Clandinin, 2013: 132).

Narrative inquiry is 'a way of honouring lived experience as a source of important knowledge and understanding' (Clandinin, 2013: 17). The methodology provides a means of learning about teachers' lives, taking into account their perspectives and perceptions and the context of their environment. A storied approach to studying teachers' experiences recognises the value of real-life accounts provided by these professionals, answering the call for 'a more responsive [teacher education] practice with narratives about teachers, for teachers and by teachers' (Sinner, 2013: 9).

I explore EFL teachers' stories of remote teaching through drawings, contextualised by recorded conversations. As I argue in Brandão (2019: 210), 'by drawing their stories, teachers can holistically express their experiences, dilemmas and struggles, and also creatively make sense of who

they are becoming'. Visual methods can also help research participants share feelings and communicate the ineffable (Bach, 2007; Kalaja *et al.*, 2013; Weber, 2008). They are useful tools 'to see as a participant sees' (Riessman, 2008: 142).

3.1 Participants and their context of remote teaching

The participants of this study are two state school EFL teachers from different parts of Mato Grosso, Brazil, Laura and Tamara (not their real names), who taught remotely in 2020. Because of the pandemic, Laura's employment status was uncertain until she was rehired in July. Tamara was tenured in any case. Both began teaching remotely in August 2020. An overview of their profiles is given in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Participants' profiles

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Teaching experience	Groups taught in 2020	Type of employment
Laura	Female	31	7 years	Sixth form (year 13) and EJA (Youth and adults education programme)	Contract
Tamara	Female	37	19 years	Secondary education (years 7–10)	Tenure

To qualify for the study, teachers must have taught English remotely between August and December 2020. My interactions with Laura and Tamara took place online because of social distancing rules. Before gathering the field texts (the narrative term for data), I met each of them via Google Meet to explain the purpose of the study and what their participation would demand. I got to know about their backgrounds and the format for their remote teaching. I told them the study was about remote teaching and avoided the word resilience so as not to bias the outcome.

As mandated by the state, all teachers had to accommodate students with three levels of internet coverage: (1) full, (2) limited, or (3) none, which determined the use of (1) Microsoft Teams, (2) WhatsApp and (3) printable materials, respectively. The state only provided handouts for the first month, whereafter teachers had to design their own. Reports were required for all the teachers' activities. Compulsory WhatsApp groups mediated between teachers, schools and parents.

Before teaching began, the little preparation offered by the state focused on Microsoft Teams, guidelines for remote teaching, and distance education.

3.2 Field texts

The field texts include drawings and recorded conversations. They were gathered in January 2021, covering EFL teachers' perceptions of

Table 4.2 The process of gathering field texts

Participant	Drawing sent by email	Recorded conversation via Google Meet
Laura	21 January 2021	26 January 2021
Tamara	18 January 2021	21 January 2021

their first months of remote teaching (August–December 2020). Excerpts presented in the Findings section have been translated into English. An overview of the process of gathering field texts is given in Table 4.2.

I asked each participant to draw their experience of teaching English remotely by hand. The drawings were returned by email before recorded conversations took place via Google Meet, which lasted about two hours each. In our conversations, I asked each participant to (1) talk about their reactions to the announcement of remote teaching, (2) describe their drawings and the underlying experiences, and (3) explain how they were affected by those experiences. Drawings took the form of an arts-based elicitation method (see Bagnoli, 2009; Rose, 2016): they facilitated my participants’ reflection on remote teaching, and their conversations about the depicted stories and happenings shaping them.

3.3 Analysis procedures

Analysis was developed in four stages:

- (1) I analysed the drawings by identifying the visual elements and noting their spatial arrangements.
- (2) I analysed the transcribed conversations first by coding them narratively (in terms of people, events, tensions and shifts), and then by enumerating challenges, responses and outcomes.
- (3) I related drawings to conversations, identifying narrative threads.
- (4) I wrote overall narrative accounts for each participant.

I present the findings of this study in the form of overall narrative accounts, one per teacher. They are interpretative accounts, structured around narrative threads articulating challenges, responses and outcomes that shape the teachers’ depicted stories of teaching English remotely and exercising their resilience: ‘Coping with heavy workload and frustration’ and ‘Coping with physical and mental tiredness’.

4 Findings

4.1 Laura: Coping with heavy workload and frustration

Laura was relieved that her contract had been renewed after months of uncertainty, owing to pandemic disruption. However, she was scared

and anxious about remote teaching. ‘How are we going to develop our work?’ she wondered.

In Figure 4.1, Laura draws her experience of teaching English remotely. It depicts both ‘the positive and negative points I encountered throughout this period’.

Laura centred her drawing around a teacher, who is clearly overwhelmed with a long list of responsibilities. These read: ‘skills’, ‘planning’, ‘portfolio’, ‘handouts’, ‘teacher development’, ‘printable activities’, ‘videos’, ‘to encourage’, ‘audio messages’, ‘records’, ‘evaluation’, ‘to supervise’, ‘inequalities’, ‘to record’ and ‘forms’. Question marks surround an anonymous-looking avatar. To the right, she drew the familiar thumbs up, WIFI and WhatsApp icons. To the left, no WIFI signal and thumbs down icons, and a book of some kind.

As she explains, the thumbs up and WIFI icons represent positive experiences with technology:

I think this period made us teachers learn more, develop our technological side more, get to know more tools ... So, I was able to share a lot of materials with my students: PDFs, e-books, videos ... It was also an important moment for me to rethink my teaching practice. Because there, at school, we usually end up using the whiteboard more ... I like taking them to the ICT lab. I like using the projector ... but this is hard ... the day you want to use it, it’s not available, and we have only one [English] class [per week] ... sometimes, you end up wasting a lot of the class just to set up the equipment.



Figure 4.1 Laura’s drawing: A visualisation of her experience of teaching English remotely

As an outcome of remote teaching, digital technology was finally normalised in Laura's pedagogical practice. But there were 'more down sides than up sides', she admitted. Laura had to cope with a number of adversities. For example, she had to assume a large number of additional roles. This is represented by 'the teacher with the mouth open, scared, thinking about the number of things she has to do', depicted in the centre of her drawing. As she explains, 'there was planning, and student portfolios to update every week. Then, suddenly, you have to record classes, send audio messages to the students. We also had to design our own handouts'. In fact, accommodating differences in students' internet coverage made her work double:

We had students that had internet connection and students that didn't ... so I had to record classes ... and upload them on the platform, and design handouts and send audio messages, get in contact via WhatsApp with students that had internet – but not enough to login to the platform ... and yet we had to assist others [students], that had no internet connection ... They only studied with the printable materials they picked up at school.

Essentially, Laura had to perform the role of three different teachers for the same class to accommodate the digital divide among her students. The thumbs down and no WIFI signal icons summarise this divide:

I had students that only had internet access at work. I had students that only bought the cell phone data package for downloading the materials ... some had to go to their neighbours ... it [technology] includes but, at the same time, excludes because we have this big social inequality among our students ... if they all had access, I believe my classes would have been better.

Laura's own internet could also let her down: 'sometimes I couldn't access the platform myself because of my connection ... and the students would start asking on WhatsApp "won't there be any classes today?" This made me despair'.

Throughout remote teaching Laura had to design a large quantity of materials to assist students that had no internet connection, hence the book on the left-hand side of the drawing. As she explains, this book is also a reference to a meagre four-page printing limit imposed on English: 'The most valued subjects were Portuguese and Mathematics, they had more pages [in the monthly printable materials]', she complains.

WhatsApp, depicted on the right-hand side of the image, also increased her workload significantly as groups proliferated, and she could not avoid teaching on the app. However, Laura could see some advantages in using WhatsApp: 'we got closer to them ... but at the same time I felt that my privacy was invaded ... there were students sending messages on a Saturday at 10 pm ... on Sunday, at lunch time ... they got angry [when I didn't reply to them]'. Collaboration with colleagues was also made easier

through the app: ‘we, English teachers, have a WhatsApp group ... we exchange a lot of materials there’. This ambivalent representation of technology illustrates that increased interaction and collaboration come at the cost of blurring the limits between the professional and personal, and going beyond the level of one’s duties.

For Laura, the experience of remote teaching was ‘frustrating’, as represented by the anonymous avatar on the right-hand side of the drawing: ‘It was very difficult for me not knowing my students ... I asked them to leave the cameras on but nobody did ... I didn’t get to see their faces ... very few left the camera on ... they didn’t interact ... they didn’t ask anything’. Some students were too embarrassed to switch on their cameras, while others had connection issues. It felt to Laura like she was only talking to herself. Because of such a lack of interaction, she could not develop other skills apart from reading and writing. Although the internet facilitated contact with students during the pandemic, she nevertheless felt distant from her students given their lack of participation.

Laura’s drawing reflects the outcome of a very abrupt transition to remote teaching. As she highlights, ‘there wasn’t enough time to assimilate everything that was coming ... things went on and you were there lost ... I left meetings not knowing where to go ... I didn’t feel prepared at all’. Despite feeling lost, Laura remained committed to her students’ learning and wellbeing:

I thought about me, my mental health, but I also thought about my students ... What about those finishing sixth form [high school]? They have challenges, dreams. They want to get into a university ... they also have their personal challenges ... the classroom became a screen ... Everything was new and novelty is scary ... it was difficult for them too ... I cared a lot about what I was offering them in terms of formal knowledge.

Overall, Laura’s drawing depicts stories of feeling overwhelmed by challenges, such as the lack of effective teacher development initiatives, heavy workload, and lack of resources and privacy. It also depicts stories of feeling frustrated by students’ lack of participation, social inequality and the low status of English in the curriculum.

Laura exercised her resilience, meeting these challenges in a number of ways. She developed her relationship with peers:

Sometimes, I found something that I knew would help ... other teachers and sent it to the group, and vice-versa. It was a very nice exchange ... We managed to establish a dialogue, a very nice collaboration ... The [emotional] support I had from other teachers was very important too ... we could share our feelings there in our group. There was always someone to lift you up: ‘it’s tough but we’ll overcome it’ ... the same applies to our coordinators ... They lifted us up.

Laura preserved her personal space by not replying to students after working hours: ‘I’m not at their disposal at any time ... but we have to be

careful when explaining this to the student in order not to offend them. I even put in my drawing [the verb] “to encourage” in the sense of making this boy stay’. Finally, she was aware of her limits: ‘I learned that sometimes I cannot do everything given the system, the public policies ... we have to think in terms of “what am I able to do? Did I do my best given the context?” And I think I did’.

Reflecting on the outcomes of navigating the challenges faced during remote teaching, Laura explains:

I learned so much in this process ... I learned I’m always developing. Obviously, I knew it before the pandemic but during these four months this became more evident to me ... I learned that I can adapt to this [digital] environment, I can learn from my colleague, I can learn from my students, I can reconstruct myself as a teacher ... I also learned that I miss the interaction with my students a lot ... I miss knowing who this boy is, what he aims for in life, what his story is.

Adapting to remote teaching shaped Laura as a professional in different ways. It gave her some agency and experience in normalising technology in her English teaching practice. It also reassured her about the important role co-learning and support play in her own development as a teacher, and the meaning that student–teacher interaction gives to the profession.

4.2 Tamara: Coping with mental and physical tiredness

The prospect of teaching remotely worried Tamara: ‘even in face-to-face classes we can’t reach some students ... how would they take it? How would I get their attention?’ She was also concerned about her lack of preparation: ‘we’ve never had any preparation for this at school ... I think I’ve never felt so afraid ... I’ve never had so many butterflies in my stomach’. Tamara wondered: ‘How am I going to upload content on the platform? And give classes there? ... How am I going to make the kids understand what I am trying to teach?’

In Figure 4.2, Tamara draws her experience of teaching English remotely.

Tamara drew a grimacing face emoji in the centre accompanied by a thought balloon with squiggles. Underneath, a balloon over the laptop reads ‘remote classes’. On the right, there is an open book lying face down, and an English handout. There are also unhappy emojis of a sleeping girl and a crying boy. On the left, there are WIFI icons and a mobile phone with apps. There are 300 unread messages on WhatsApp.

The WIFI icons and the mobile phone represent the immediate necessity of getting WIFI from another company: ‘a better WIFI for me to work ... [and] another mobile phone’. As she explains, ‘I had to install apps I didn’t use before ... mine didn’t have enough storage space’. She was then quickly overwhelmed: ‘basically, it was like this: 300 messages per day ...

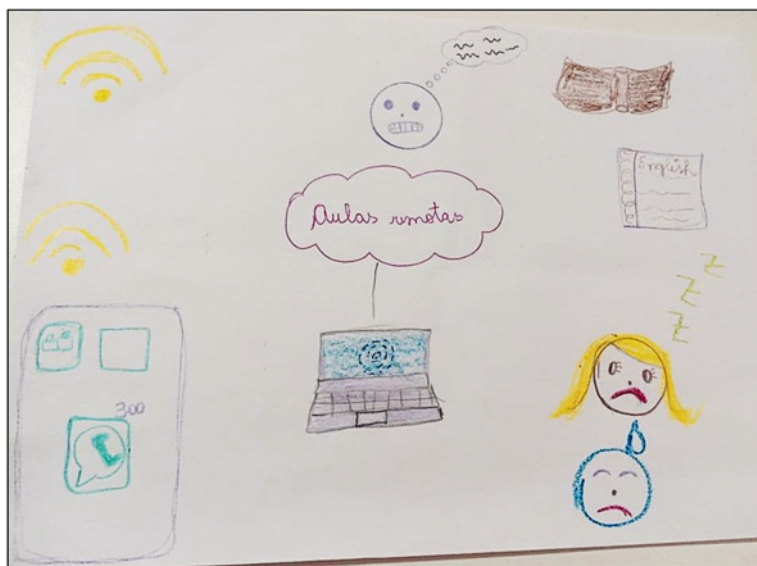


Figure 4.2 Tamara's drawing: a visualisation of her experience of teaching English remotely

we had to join 10 different groups ... initially, it didn't cross my mind to buy a sim to have a different number'. Tamara had to find her own means to adapt to online teaching. She also had to cope with the increase in her workload due to the compulsory use of WhatsApp. Yet there were other challenges concerning technology use:

Many students had my mobile phone number, not to mention these kids' parents. It was a great invasion of privacy because messages came at any time ... sometimes, at 1am there was a student sending me messages, asking about something, asking for an explanation even after we made clear that messages could only be sent during working hours.

Tamara struggled to protect her privacy and establish limits between her professional and home life. Like Laura, she experienced the downsides of technology use. The grimacing face emoji, depicted in the centre of the drawing, illustrates her discontent. The emoji represents the 'various thoughts about what to do, how to do it', given that:

a million things crossed my mind ... and in the beginning, I confess I didn't know how to organise these thoughts. I couldn't set a routine. Why? First, because we had our personal lives invaded ... everybody was calling us all the time, there wasn't that routine like on a certain day, you have a meeting, on a certain day, teacher development, on a certain day, planning ... It got all mixed ... and we had to write monthly reports ... to prove we worked ... [besides] I don't have any vocation for being a blogger or youtuber ... I struggled a lot to record classes ... one of my

main difficulties was to be in front of the camera recording a video explaining something without the student's feedback.

The teaching format presented Tamara with a number of adversities. For example, the format lacked routine and she had to meet new demands. She bemoaned the limited student interaction, hence the unhappy emojis on the right-hand side of the drawing. As she explains, 'few opened their cameras and the ones that did were like this ... like the blue one, sad, unhappy because they didn't understand anything, or like the other one, sleeping in front of the camera and hardly participating'.

Microsoft Teams, the teaching platform adopted by the state, did not help. The endlessly updating laptop in the centre of the drawing accounts for Tamara's dissatisfaction with the platform: 'many times it didn't work, it updated and updated, and didn't allow us to sign in ... there were also embarrassing situations of people who didn't belong to the groups ... invading the classes and posting inappropriate content'. Besides, 'it was difficult to develop listening activities and the speaking ones were impossible. For example, if I set three speaking activities, one got done'. The state provided few resources for online teaching, while the students struggled with their internet coverage.

The lack of involvement of parents also disappointed Tamara: 'there were parents that didn't help, didn't understand our difficulties'. One parent even told her that teaching his kid was 'not my job'. Other parents were simply unable to help: 'some parents got in contact to say their kids wouldn't study that year, that they wouldn't help them with their homework because they didn't know how to read and write'.

The teaching format posed other challenges. For instance, Tamara had to design her own materials for students who did not have internet access – despite the availability of ready-to-use materials. Tamara referenced this by having the textbook lying face down in the top right-hand side of the drawing: 'this took away my sleep, my peace ... if we have ready-to-use materials why can't we optimise our time? ... it took me a while to adapt and design my own materials'. Tamara resented this given all her effort adapting to remote teaching overnight.

Long hours in front of computer screens took its toll: 'I got a lot of headaches, migraine, ... and backache ... it was physical tiredness too ... not to mention the mental tiredness'. Remote teaching was both mentally and physically demanding for her.

Tamara felt 'powerless' and 'incapable' because of the teaching format. She was frustrated she could not be the English teacher she wanted to be:

resources, teacher training, professional, psychological and emotional preparation were lacking ... I had to reinvent myself. Working from home isn't easy when you live with other people ... I'm much better than what I was able to offer ... I'm conscious about what I'm able to offer as a teacher and this pandemic teaching somehow limited what I could offer.

Lack of support, resources and proper working conditions meant that Tamara had to exercise her agency throughout the initial stages of remote teaching. She learned by doing, reinventing herself as a teacher. Despite the limitations, she remained committed to her students' learning throughout: 'I helped everybody that sought my help. I replied to messages outside working hours, on the weekends, because I had students on maternal leave, for example, that only had time on weekends when their mothers could help take care of the baby'. Tamara understood that it was not easy for her students either and tried to help them in spite of the obstacles posed by remote teaching.

In summary, Tamara's drawing depicts stories of experiencing emotional tiredness given challenges, such as heavy workload, lack of resources and teacher preparation initiatives, students' lack of participation, invasion of privacy, the low status of English, and students' background inequality. It also depicts stories of physical tiredness from long hours in front of screens.

Tamara exercised her resilience by responding to these challenges in different ways. For example, she accepted her limits under the circumstances:

I wouldn't be able to solve all the problems of remote teaching ... I got to this understanding. Otherwise, I would be sick like many colleagues ... I thought 'I'll do my best ... [but] I won't try to carry the world on my back' ... it was a way of protecting myself ... I'm not a wonder woman.

Tamara also sought opportunities to collaborate with colleagues and gained confidence with digital technology:

I joined a (WhatsApp) group of teachers from the state ... they shared activities and we designed materials collaboratively ... it wasn't an initiative of the school ... It was from a course I took on digital technologies [during the pandemic] ... colleagues that were more knowledgeable with technology helped me a lot there.

Finally, Tamara took up exercise to offset long hours at the screen. Taking stock of her experience of teaching English remotely, Tamara reflects on the outcomes:

I learned it's necessary to take care of our physical health, our mental health, take care of myself as a professional, cooperate and collaborate ... it [remote teaching] made me diversify my classes, think of different activities, [and] how to work in a different way ... I worked from home so I had the opportunity to see things I wouldn't see if I wasn't at home, this is a fact, like watching my kids grow up.

Teaching English remotely reverberated in both Tamara's professional and personal life. She discovered the important role collaboration plays in her development as a teacher and experienced technology normalisation in her teaching practice. She learned to maintain an equilibrium between her professional and personal life.

5 Lessons Learnt

As visual journals, Laura's and Tamara's drawings give a holistic view of their experiences of exercising resilience while adapting to remote teaching. The drawings capture the teachers' attempts to do their best despite feeling lost, overwhelmed and powerless. In coping with the abrupt transition to a different teaching format, Laura and Tamara struggled with excessive workloads, inadequate resources, unengaged students, and a lack of privacy. Similar challenges were identified in other studies (see Braga *et al.*, 2021; Có *et al.*, 2020; Coscarelli, 2020; Ludovico *et al.*, 2021; Ribeiro, 2020).

Laura and Tamara responded to challenges by taking care of their wellbeing and seeking help from peers, as did language teachers in Braga *et al.*'s (2021) study. These are coping strategies adopted by participants from research on teacher resilience as well (see Fan *et al.*, 2021; Gu & Day, 2013; James & Brandão, 2019; Lu & Zhu, 2022). Overall, they managed to keep a sense of commitment and agency, a necessary condition for teacher resilience (Gu & Day, 2013). In doing so, they did more than survive remote teaching. Consequently, the experience of teaching English remotely shaped Laura and Tamara as professionals: they learned how to diversify their teaching practices, adapt to online teaching formats, collaborate and develop strategies to enhance their wellbeing.

Teacher resilience requires, in part, self-efficacy (Gu & Day, 2007). In this sense, Laura and Tamara felt that remote teaching compromised their performance as teachers. While the sheer abruptness of the pandemic was unprecedented, pre-existing challenges were exacerbated in the language teaching landscape of Brazilian state schools. These include:

- (1) The poor implementation of technology in schools, given the lack of adequate resources and teacher training (Ribeiro, 2016, 2020).
- (2) The lack of consistent professional development opportunities (Celani, 2010).
- (3) The low status of English in the curriculum and students' lack of interest in the language (Assis-Peterson & Cox, 2007; British Council, 2015; James & Brandão, 2019).

Thus, remote teaching depicted in Laura's and Tamara's drawings tells an old story: of state school teachers and students being 'lonely, abandoned in the task of teaching/learning English' (Assis-Peterson & Cox, 2007: 12).

If teachers meet these challenges by exercising their resilience, then how can resilience be fostered? At the general level, teacher education initiatives that develop skills in emotional wellbeing, classroom management, collaboration and self-reflection, can promote teacher resilience (see Fernandes *et al.*, 2020; Silva *et al.*, 2018; Wosnitza *et al.*, 2018). In addition, allowance should be made for the inherent uncertainty of the

profession. Therefore, teachers should be given opportunities to reflect on their own practices. Drawings, and the exercise of contextualising them, can help towards this end.

While the pandemic exposed the wholly inadequate digital infrastructure, lack of digital skills, and lack of preparedness for online teaching, it also, in a baptism of fire, presented teachers with opportunities to explore the potential of digital technology. However, as this study highlights, technology alone will not make language classes better and accessible, nor teachers more resilient. Digital resources are merely tools, requiring supporting conditions and skilful teachers to use them. In adopting technology, teachers could discover fresh insights into teaching and learning. With the challenges and opportunities technology brings, teachers will be able to reflect on their resilience in this increasingly digitised world.

Laura's and Tamara's stories of resilience were set against the backdrop of the low status of English in the curriculum and large levels of social inequality in Brazilian state schools. They reported on limits on printer usage, illiterate parents and teenage pregnancy, for example.

For Brazilian low-income students, state schools represent the main opportunity to learn a foreign language. Also, as praised by national educational guidelines, foreign language access drives cultural and socioeconomic mobility. The digital divide, which exposes the social inequality of Brazilian society, restricted access to English during the pandemic, as this study illuminates. Interaction, which plays an important role in language classes, was compromised. This was something both Laura and Tamara resented. Besides, students had unequal learning opportunities: those without internet access could neither interact with teachers nor experience the language as a social practice. Laura and Tamara did what they could to minimise this gap with limited resources and little experience in distance/online education.

Brazil has a long way to go to promote social justice and equity through foreign language access via state education. Initiatives include providing language teacher development opportunities and giving more space to English in the curriculum by increasing the number of classes per week at state schools. English is the key to accessing education and information. By having better prepared English schoolteachers and more chances to practise the language, like those who can afford it, state school students will have this access improved. Hopefully, experiences of remote teaching during the pandemic make the call for social justice and equity even more evident and urgent.

Arts-based methods provide opportunities to examine 'the everyday in imaginative ways that draw attention to the cruelties and contradictions inherent in neoliberal society' (Foster, 2016: 1). Essentially, they 'enable a diversity of experiences to be communicated in ways that disrupt "common sense" understandings and act as a reminder that there are possibilities for things to be otherwise' (Foster, 2016: 1). They do so

by providing alternative ways of seeing and experiencing the world. Through creative expression, such as visual arts, music or dance, individuals can explore and challenge dominant narratives and reveal the complexities and contradictions of everyday life. By using visual materials to examine the everyday, Laura and Tamara, for example, can develop critical consciousness and become more aware of the ways in which teaching policies shape their lives and experiences. They can also challenge dominant narratives and reimagine alternative futures.

Dedication

I dedicate this work to Danielle, one of the many victims of Covid-19 in Brazil. She was a committed doctor and, above all, my best friend – a sister I had the privilege to spend time with ever since we met at school as teenagers. Danielle taught me so much about resilience.

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