

# “Juggling while running”: Emergency remote teaching of translation in times of educational disruption

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Volume 67, Number 2, August 2022

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1096255ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1096255ar>

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## Publisher(s)

Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal

## ISSN

0026-0452 (print)

1492-1421 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

## Cite this article

Stanojević, M.-M. & Pavlović, N. (2022). “Juggling while running”: Emergency remote teaching of translation in times of educational disruption. *Meta*, 67(2), 253–273. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1096255ar>

## Article abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic caused an unprecedented educational disruption in university programs worldwide, with translator education being no exception. The sudden and unplanned transition from campus or blended to online instructional environments, termed “emergency remote teaching” or ERT (Hodges, Moore, *et al.* 2020), imposed a unique strain on students, teachers and institutions. Aiming to reassess the concept of ERT so as to enable a better response in the future, this study investigates the reflections of nine translation teachers from three universities in Croatia on their ERT experience in the March-June semester of 2020. To this end, three semi-structured focus groups were conducted in July 2020. Results show that the teachers had to adapt to the new learning environment and cater to their students' changed learning and emotional needs, while reorganising their home life and learning new skills. In these circumstances, described by one of the participants as “juggling while running,” the social support given and received by teachers was found to be a crucial factor at play. The experience is shown to have had an impact not only on their ERT, but also on their future practices. Some recommendations are drawn in the conclusion.

# “Juggling while running”: emergency remote teaching of translation in times of educational disruption

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## RÉSUMÉ

La pandémie de COVID-19 a provoqué une perturbation sans précédent des programmes universitaires dans le monde entier, la formation des traducteurs ne faisant pas exception. La transition soudaine et imprévue du campus ou de la formation hybride à un environnement pédagogique en ligne, appelée «l'enseignement à distance d'urgence» (EDU) (Hodges, Moore, *et al.* 2020), a pesé sur les étudiants, les professeurs et les institutions. Dans le but de réévaluer le concept de l'EDU afin de permettre une meilleure réponse à l'avenir, la présente étude examine les réflexions de neuf professeurs de traduction de trois universités croates quant à leur expérience de l'EDU au cours du semestre de mars à juin 2020. À cette fin, trois groupes de discussion semi-structurés ont été organisés en juillet 2020. Les résultats montrent que les professeurs ont dû s'adapter au nouvel environnement d'apprentissage et répondre aux nouveaux besoins d'apprentissage et besoins affectifs de leurs étudiants, tout en réorganisant leur vie familiale et en acquérant de nouvelles compétences. Dans ces circonstances, décrites par l'un des participants comme devant «jongler en courant», le soutien social accordé et reçu par les enseignants est considéré comme un facteur essentiel. Il est démontré que cette expérience a eu un impact sur leur EDU, et aussi sur leur pratique future. Certaines recommandations sont formulées en conclusion.

## ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic caused an unprecedented educational disruption in university programs worldwide, with translator education being no exception. The sudden and unplanned transition from campus or blended to online instructional environments, termed “emergency remote teaching” or ERT (Hodges, Moore, *et al.* 2020), imposed a unique strain on students, teachers and institutions. Aiming to reassess the concept of ERT so as to enable a better response in the future, this study investigates the reflections of nine translation teachers from three universities in Croatia on their ERT experience in the March-June semester of 2020. To this end, three semi-structured focus groups were conducted in July 2020. Results show that the teachers had to adapt to the new learning environment and cater to their students’ changed learning and emotional needs, while reorganising their home life and learning new skills. In these circumstances, described by one of the participants as “juggling while running,” the social support given and received by teachers was found to be a crucial factor at play. The experience is shown to have had an impact not only on their ERT, but also on their future practices. Some recommendations are drawn in the conclusion.

**RESUMEN**

La pandemia de COVID-19 provocó una interrupción educativa sin precedentes en los programas universitarios de todo el mundo, incluida la formación de traductores. La repentina y no planificada transición de entornos de enseñanza presencial o semipresencial a entornos de enseñanza en línea, denominada “enseñanza remota de emergencia” (ERE; Hodges, Moore, *et al.* 2020), ejerció una presión insólita sobre estudiantes, profesores e instituciones. Con el objetivo de reevaluar el concepto de ERE y permitir una mejor respuesta en el futuro, este estudio investiga las reflexiones de nueve profesores de traducción de tres universidades de Croacia sobre su experiencia durante el semestre de marzo a junio de 2020. Para ello, se realizaron tres grupos focales semiestructurados en julio de 2020. Los resultados muestran que los profesores tuvieron que adaptarse al nuevo entorno de aprendizaje y atender a las nuevas necesidades emocionales y educativas de sus estudiantes, mientras reorganizaban su vida familiar y adquirían nuevas habilidades. Se descubrió que el apoyo social dado y recibido por los profesores fue un factor crucial en el proceso. Se demuestra que la experiencia afectó no sólo a la ERE, sino también a su práctica docente futura. A modo de conclusión, se formulan algunas recomendaciones.

**MOTS-CLÉS/KEYWORDS/PALABRAS CLAVE**

formation des traducteurs, enseignement à distance d'urgence, soutien pédagogique, compétences d'enseignement en ligne, interaction  
 translator education, emergency remote teaching, teacher support, online teaching skills, interaction  
 formación de traductores, enseñanza remota de emergencia, apoyo del/al profesorado, habilidades para la enseñanza virtual, interacción

**1. Introduction**

The COVID-19 pandemic declared in March, 2020, caused an unprecedented educational disruption worldwide, with translator education being affected alongside other university programs. The overnight transition to fully online learning environments corresponds to the concept of emergency remote teaching (ERT), “a temporary shift of instructional delivery to an alternate delivery mode due to crisis circumstances” (Hodges, Moore, *et al.* 2020). Online learning can be defined as “[t]he use of the Internet to access learning materials; to interact with the content, instructor, and other learners; and to obtain support during the learning process” (Ally 2004: 17). However, in contrast to instruction originally designed to be delivered online, in ERT, the move online is sudden and unplanned, expected to last only until the end of the emergency (Hodges, Moore, *et al.* 2020). Therefore, the crucial difference between ERT and a program designed to be fully online comes from the “ecosystem” of formal, informal and social support (Hodges, Moore, *et al.* 2020), not only for learners but also for teachers (Baran, Correia, *et al.* 2011).

Discussions of ERT typically emphasise systematicity and the institutional nature of support (e.g., Hodges, Moore, *et al.* 2020). However, in more traditional universities – those that have not (yet) made the neoliberal turn – standardisation and audit procedures have not fully replaced “subjective, experience-based, dialogic and in other ways less tangible or incommensurate procedures for evaluating performance” (Krause-Jensen and Garsten 2014: 6), which are still highly valued and often taken for granted both by instructors and institutions. In this context, top-down

guidelines and support mechanisms have usually not been fully instituted to ensure achievement of standards (Mihailova 2014: 26), and teachers still "operate in relative professional isolation" (Woodland and Mazur 2019: 43). This is relevant for the present study since it describes universities in Croatia in early 2020.

To find out what challenges translation teachers faced in the "online overnight" transition in the March-June semester of 2020 and what lessons they learned in the process, we conducted focus groups with nine participants from three Croatian universities. The study aims to reframe the concept of ERT to include the teachers' view, enabling a better response to similar emergencies in future. We begin by outlining the main issues in ERT, and then focus on teacher support as a concept most relevant for the present study. Next, we describe our study design, present the main results and draw some implications, which we hope can inform planning for future emergencies involving educational disruptions.

## 2. Literature review

ERT has prompted a number of recent publications in various fields, including translator education. The main challenges of ERT revolve around the strain imposed on students, teachers and administrators, as existing support frameworks face pressure coping with increased needs for an immediate response (Hodges, Moore, *et al.* 2020). In this process, "teachers have, almost overnight, been asked to become both designers and tutors, using tools which few have fluently mastered" (Rapanta, Botturi, *et al.* 2020: 926). Indeed, translation teachers, like educators in other disciplines, report having little formal training in teaching online and being ill-prepared for ERT (Wu and Wei 2021: 302; Breitenbach 2021; Izquierdo, Caraveo Sandoral, *et al.* 2021: 675). Consequently, they had to train themselves (Breitenbach 2021: 12; Izquierdo, Caraveo Sandoral, *et al.* 2021: 675), which resulted in an increase in workloads (Breitenbach 2021: 12; Izquierdo, Caraveo Sandoral, *et al.* 2021). To facilitate learning, translation teachers felt they had to be flexible (Şahin and Oral 2021: 290), which Kidd and Murray (2020) termed "pedagogical agility" in their description of ERT in teacher education. More positively, ERT provided teachers with a chance to try out new technologies (Breitenbach 2021: 13) and strengthened their pedagogical focus (Ahrens, Beaton-Thome, *et al.* 2021). To help students and teachers cope, emergency response models and recommendations have been developed in a variety of higher education contexts (Hodges, Moore, *et al.* 2020; Rapanta, Botturi, *et al.* 2020; Bozkurt and Sharma 2020; Yang and Huang 2021). They all emphasise the significance of an institutional or policy environment that would facilitate a smooth transition online for teachers and students, all the while supporting teachers in fostering social aspects of learning. Of these, socio-emotional support (Shin and Hickey 2020) and interaction (Ahrens, Beaton-Thome, *et al.* 2021) have been identified as missing in ERT by university teachers and students of translation, interpreting, and of other disciplines.

A framework for achieving these aims may be found outside of ERT. Online educational experience at universities in non-ERT situations has been conceptualised as a Community of Inquiry involving teachers and students (e.g., Garrison, Anderson, *et al.* 2010). The framework, based on constructivist principles, explores how learners can achieve social presence ("being perceived as 'real people' in mediated communication"; Garrison and Arbaugh 2007: 159) and cognitive presence, i.e., constructing

meaning “through sustained reflection and discourse” (Garrison and Arbaugh 2007: 161). Fundamental in this process is teaching presence, which seems to determine student satisfaction, perceived learning and the sense of community (Garrison and Arbaugh 2007: 163). Teaching presence relates to how teachers design, facilitate and direct cognitive and social processes, including interaction, to promote learning (Garrison and Arbaugh 2007: 163), an aspect that appears significant in our study.

All three types of presence have been suggested as significant in ERT, with teaching presence playing a central role (Rapanta, Botturi, *et al.* 2020; Carrillo and Flores 2020). Seen as integral in achieving teaching presence in ERT are the teaching skills necessary to combine pedagogy and technology (Carrillo and Flores 2020: 478). In non-ERT online environments, some skills have been identified as significant in this respect and organised into a “skills pyramid” (Stickler and Hampel 2015). These skills include: (1) basic ICT competencies, and specific competencies for particular software (Hampel and Stickler 2005: 316-317), (2) matching pedagogy and technology on the basis of technological affordances, (3) developing social cohesion and fostering communication, and (4) enhancing teaching style and (teacher/student) creativity (Stickler and Hampel 2015: 68-74). The skills do not form a “static” temporal sequence; however, organisation into a pyramid means that achieving a higher level requires solid lower level competencies (e.g., Level 3 requires solid Level 2 skills; Stickler and Hampel 2015: 65), which we expect to be relevant in the ERT context.

In this study, we posit that for teachers to develop these skills, achieve teacher presence and facilitate learning, the central ingredient is support. Teacher support has been investigated within the broader framework of social support, as described by Tardy (1985). Tardy’s model remains popular because it exhaustively covers the various interdependent elements that constitute support. According to Tardy (1985: 188-190), social support can be given and received (*direction*); it can be provided to and received from various sources, such as family, friends or colleagues (*network*); it can be merely available or actually enacted (*disposition*); it can be described or evaluated (*description/evaluation*); and it can take various forms (*content*). All of these facets are relevant for the present study, to varying degrees. The main distinction we make concerns the direction of support: the support teachers give to their students and the support they in turn need from their network. Where the distinction between available and enacted support is relevant, we also refer to this disposition. Our participants both describe and evaluate the various types of support they give and receive.

Tardy (1985: 189) distinguishes four types of support content following House (1981): emotional, instrumental, informational and appraisal. *Emotional support* refers to the perception that people care and empathise, while *instrumental support* is more tangible, seen as the provision of time, material resources and practical help. *Informational support* is the sharing of information, advice or guidance. Finally, *appraisal support* refers to feedback and positive esteem-enhancing reinforcement. This taxonomy has been applied to investigate teacher support (e.g., Malecki and Demeray 2003; Tennant, Demaray, *et al.* 2015); however, other authors have reduced the number of categories to only two, distinguishing between emotional and academic support (e.g., Patrick, Ryan, *et al.* 2007), between emotional and instrumental support (e.g., Morin 2020; Federici and Skaalvik 2014) or between emotional and instructional support (e.g., López 2012). In the present study, we have decided to keep

all four types, since such a framework is more reflective of our data. It should be pointed out, however, that distinguishing between particular types of support can be difficult if not impossible, as House (1981: 25) himself admits. For instance, a teacher who extends a student's deadline could be seen as offering instrumental support (practical aid), instructional support (longer opportunity for learning in order to mitigate an objective obstacle) or emotional support (showing care and empathy to the student facing some difficulty).

Several additional points should be made regarding the use of the described model of social support in the present study. First, informational and appraisal support as aspects of general social support, such as that received by teachers from their institutions, colleagues or families, is likely to be different from the informational and appraisal support teachers provide to students, since giving information and feedback is an essential part of a teacher's job. The term informational support, as provided by teachers, can be understood to refer to the different ways in which teachers uphold student learning, by sharing their knowledge, extending guidance or providing students with learning opportunities. For this reason, we prefer the term *instructional support*. Appraisal is another type of support which is an essential aspect of teaching, since teachers are expected to provide students with feedback and evaluation of their work. The ways in which they do so can be supportive (or detrimental) for the students' learning and their self-esteem.

Secondly, it has been observed that one type or source of support can compensate for another. Lei, Cui, *et al.* (2018: 8) thus suggest that teacher support "can supplement a student's other interpersonal relationships, especially if the latter are unreliable." We can hypothesise that the perceived lack of support available to students during ERT (normally provided by peers and the whole ecosystem of face-to-face environment) may lead teachers to increase their own support as a compensatory mechanism. The perceived lack of social presence (Carrillo and Flores 2020: 471-472) caused by the unplanned – and unchosen by either the teachers or the students – online transition may be expected to prompt teachers to seek ways to moderate the absence.

Thirdly, supportive behaviour can be studied in different ways and from different points of view, for example, as being extended to the whole group or to individuals (Hendrickx, Mainhard, *et al.* 2016). Furthermore, most studies of teacher support focus on the students' perception, using validated psychometric instruments to measure various aspects of support and their correlation with variables such as the students' well-being, motivation and, indirectly, academic achievement (for a review, see Lei, Cui, *et al.* 2018). In the present study, however, we adopt a qualitative approach. We focus solely on the teachers' point of view, with respect to both the support they provide to students to meet the students' perceived needs, and the support they themselves perceive as being needed, whether merely available from their network or enacted upon. We explore the various aspects of support dynamics within this framework, as they play out in the context of ERT.

### 3. Participants and method

The data were collected using the focus group method with a semi-structured approach. Three focus groups, each bringing together three participants and both researchers as moderators, were conducted in July, 2020, via the videoconferencing

platform *Zoom*. In previous research on focus groups, three groups were found to achieve close to 85% data saturation (Guest, Namey, *et al.* 2016) and, while the literature generally recommends six to eight participants per group, smaller focus groups have been used successfully (Bloor, Frankland, *et al.* 2001: 26-27). In the present study, we reduced the number to three participants, in line with the smallest successful use of focus groups (Bloor, Frankland, *et al.* 2001: 27), to accommodate the fact that the group discussions had to take place online. Another factor moderating the potentially detrimental effect of online format on the ambience and interaction was the relatively high level of group cohesion, as the participants in each group were from the same institution, knew one another very well and were also well acquainted with the researchers. As a result, the focus group conversations were relaxed, with an atmosphere of trust established from the very beginning. Both researchers facilitated the groups, prompting the discussions with a core set of questions (see Appendix), but also allowing the participants to broach topics of concern.

The nine participants, five women and four men (further in the text labeled as P1–P9), were mid-career translation teachers with 12-25 years of experience. They worked at three universities in Croatia, the names of which were anonymised for the purposes of this research as Institution X, Y and Z. Given the small size of the translation teacher population and the small number of institutions educating translators in Croatia (Pavlović and Antunović 2019), the sample can be considered adequate, especially because the aim of focus groups is not to generalise the results but rather to explore the participants' opinions and perceptions in depth.

Before the focus groups, the participants were informed about the research topic, the other participants in their group and which two other institutions were involved. The consent form included the option to withdraw from the study at any time, particularly if the group discussion proved stressful due to reminiscences and reliving of unpleasant experiences during the crisis period being researched. It also envisaged possible beneficial effects of a frank exchange of opinion with colleagues in a friendly environment. The participants were told that their identity would not be disclosed for publication, but the small size of the studied population involved a slight risk that the information shared in the focus group might be linked to them.

Also, prior to the focus groups, the participants were asked to provide basic information about the courses they had given in the semester under investigation (March-June 2020), the beginning of which coincided with a lockdown in Croatia due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The short pre-focus group questionnaire further asked the participants about their previous experience with, and training in, online learning.

The focus group sessions were recorded with the participants' consent, on the understanding that the recordings would be used for research purposes only. The sessions, which lasted 1h 25', 1h 30' and 1h 45', were fully transcribed, translated from Croatian into English by the researchers, and analysed qualitatively, with the help of NVivo software, using the thematic analysis method (Braun and Clarke 2006). The interpretations presented in the article were subsequently checked by the participants for accuracy.



#### 4. Results and discussion

In the investigated semester, our nine participants taught 17 translation courses at undergraduate and graduate levels, encompassing a wide variety of topics: legal translation, localisation, translation technology, translation for the media, literary translation, translation theory and terminology. Some of the courses were more theoretically oriented, some were purely practical, and some included both of these components.

For most of our participants, adapting to ERT was found to be a three-stage process involving (1) emergency response, (2) re-evaluation, and (3) regained confidence. Guiding the transition from one stage to the next were the teachers' realisations about the students' changing needs offset against their own needs and the support available to them. We first provide an overview of the semester, organised according to the three stages. We then focus on the overarching thematic complexes which flesh out the process and the tensions characteristic of it: providing support to students, the support required by teachers and teachers' reflection.

##### 4.1. Stages of adaptation to ERT

Different concerns emerged as guiding the teachers' action in each stage of the process. In stage 1, the focus was on uninterrupted content delivery; in stage 2, on balancing their own competences and needs, student needs and content delivery; and in stage 3, on teachers' beliefs about what constitutes the most effective teaching.

The switch to ERT was sudden, new to everyone ("we may be experienced in teaching, but this is a completely new situation" (P4)), and required a quick response. This meant falling back on what the teachers felt secure about, enabling them to improvise at a moment's notice ("we were all improvising" (P2)). For instance, one participant was teaching a class when the transition online was announced for what was expected to be a period of three weeks: "I immediately gave them assignments for the following three weeks, and said, okay, do this homework, hoping that all would be over soon." (P5) This illustrates that the teachers exhibited "pedagogical agility" (Kidd and Murray 2020: 552) and their first response was to deliver the planned content without interruption. To do this, they used their tried-and-true activities (e.g., having students submit a translation assignment and providing group feedback) via platforms they knew well ("I did not try anything new, because there was no need" (P2)). This was possible because all but one teacher had had at least some experience with *Moodle*-based platforms, which they had already used for various activities that accompanied their classroom delivery before the pandemic. They continued to use these familiar platforms as a central point of communication with students, while the remaining teacher used *Facebook Messenger* for that purpose. None of the participants had experience in delivering fully online courses.

The second stage hinged on teachers re-evaluating their practices by juggling (1) the planned learning outcomes, (2) their own training needs to make learning happen in a way that they felt it should, and (3) providing urgent support to students. Teachers self-trained to find new ways of teaching with which they could be comfortable and could fall back on when something did not go as planned.

*Moodle* was supplemented with video conferencing tools such as *Microsoft Teams* (in the case of one teacher), *Zoom* and *BigBlueButton* (BBB), in an attempt to conduct



synchronous classes and reignite interaction. The last tool, being open source and free, was the recommended conferencing tool at two of the three institutions. However, due to technical constraints, BBB did not support the whole group having their cameras on in the same session, which the participants found to be a serious hindrance. At institution Y, one teacher thus gave up attempts at delivering synchronous classes with the whole group and instead made himself available for one-on-one “consultation” sessions to discuss student assignments and translation in general. Another teacher switched to *Zoom*, dividing students into groups of 3-4 for synchronous discussions. The third one also switched to *Zoom* relatively early on and, after initial hiccups, managed to have regular synchronous classes for the rest of the semester, which were also recorded for those students who missed a class. Two teachers at institution X had regular synchronous classes via *Zoom* or *Microsoft Teams*, without recording them. The third attempted to have classes via *Facebook Messenger* but admitted that this did not work in the long run. At institution Z, the solution was to rely more strongly on the asynchronous mode, with only sporadic synchronous classes, delivered mostly over BBB. Thus, in this stage, the teachers settled on a way to organise their teaching in terms of content, mode of delivery and student support (see Section 4.2.) that worked for them, as they became familiar with the affordances of various online tools.

The third stage was marked by the realisation that their ERT classes, even when using synchronous video tools, were not meeting their expectations. The teachers felt they had to “compensate for” (P1, P8) the deficiencies of the online medium (See 4.2. for details), as perceived in comparison to their face-to-face classes. Based on this realisation and their previous self-training, they established new routines for themselves and their students using the affordances of the online medium to provide the learning opportunities and interaction that they felt were satisfactory.

For instance, one teacher had the students select the texts to be translated in groups and found that this approach made them much more actively involved. In fact, most teachers realised that the learning outcomes of practical courses could be achieved in ERT more easily than those of theoretical courses. Since translation is a job that is often done online and, in its freelance form, performed from home, our participants believed that the “practical [translation] course suffered the least” (P8) because even before the crisis, the students “normally translated at home and in class we’d discuss, and now we did that over *Zoom*” (P8). Another teacher described successfully completing an authentic localisation project in cooperation with a translation/localisation agency. However, other outcomes, for instance those related to the acquisition of metacognitive skills, or soft skills such as those developed during internships in translation agencies, required more effort to be adapted to the online format: “the theoretical [course], that one was sort of boring... It was bumpy. For that kind of course online is not so suitable” (P7). Still, solutions were found for this too: one teacher had students regularly write short reports on theoretical articles, and found it enlightening, because the students’ understanding of the theoretical notions was sometimes different from his own, which enriched his teaching. We return to this issue in Section 4.2.

The third stage also involved organising student assessment, which proved to be less problematic than expected for all participants, thanks to their regained confidence. All teachers used some form of continuous assessment, as they would have

normally done. In practical translation courses, graded assignments were administered via *Moodle*, which most had done before. Adjustments were made to exams by all teachers in theoretical translation courses, with some mentioning their concerns about cheating as the reason for the change. Essay-type exams requiring students to make connections between different parts of the material were given rather than fact-based exams. One teacher conducted assessment as an asynchronous take-home exam, where students could use any literature needed and had one week to respond.

As we mentioned in Section 2, adapting to ERT can be viewed in terms of the skills pyramid proposed by Stickler and Hampel (2015). For our participants, each new ERT stage meant mastering new skills built on existing ones, on the way towards enhancing creativity and finding a new teaching style. This involved building a new teaching presence to balance between cognitive and social presence in line with (newly discovered) affordances of online technologies. In terms of progression, adapting to ERT was by no means as smooth or linear as the stage narrative might make it seem, which parallels the insight that the skills pyramid is not temporally organised (Stickler and Hampel 2015: 65). At different points during the semester, teachers wavered between the students' increased emotional needs and teaching content/methods to achieve the expected learning outcomes. They felt that they had to provide support to their students, whose needs had suddenly changed. This had a profound effect on how they structured, managed and delivered content, with expected learning outcomes, skills and competences being constantly adjusted to perceived student needs, and what teachers could realistically achieve given their level of technical knowledge, the support that they had and other circumstances (e.g., access to equipment). Thus, teachers were in an intermediary position which revolved around the support that they had to provide and the support they required, as we discuss below.

#### 4.2. *Teacher support to students*

Teachers reported on various student needs, including material needs, emotional needs and learning needs that were not being adequately met during the crisis. Unmet material needs here refer to the students' lack of adequate preconditions for academic work, such as workspace, equipment, internet access and access to libraries, as well as students having to work to support themselves or having lost their regular source of income due to the pandemic. Unmet emotional needs refer to students missing contact with and support from their peers, not having a "student life" (P3); students being "left to their own devices" (P7) as a result of not having regular contact with student services; students suffering from stress, anxiety, loneliness, "Zoom fatigue" (P3) and being concerned about their future. Finally, unmet learning needs have to do with the perceived deficiencies of the ERT learning environment, for which neither the students nor the teachers had been fully prepared or had willingly chosen as a medium of instruction. All these needs were reported as missing in ERT by university students (Shin and Hickey 2020), confirming that they all belong to the "ecosystem" of formal, informal and social support identified as absent in ERT (Hodges, Moore, *et al.* 2020).

Despite being unable to change students' material circumstances or offer professional counselling, teachers felt it was part of their role to try to counteract the negative effects of the crisis by offering increased instrumental and emotional

support. Support included, for example, extension of assignment deadlines and tolerance of absences from synchronous classes (“I didn’t want to insist” (P4, P6), “didn’t want to push it” (P6), “didn’t want to traumatize them further” (P3), “didn’t penalise them” (P2, P5, P8), “tolerated” (P1, P5, P6), “used common sense” (P4)). Some teachers noticed that the most effective delivery involved shorter, more focused sessions because long lectures made it difficult for students to focus (similar results are reported for interpreting by Ahrens, Beaton-Thome, *et al.* 2021: 262-263 and Krouglov 2021: 51-52). The teachers also changed class schedules to make sure it suited students and one teacher recorded classes for students to watch if they missed a class. The teachers further attempted to provide students with structure, which included scheduling regular activities at expected times (“it actually suited them to have some sort of schedule in their lives” (P4)) or giving the students a roadmap of future course activities with dates.

Emotional support was explicitly mentioned by participants, who tried to be “friendly” and “encourage” students (P8). This was all the more pronounced in the case of exchange students, who were far away from their homes: “I asked them how they were, let them know they were not alone. I felt like I was their mother.” (P8) Providing emotional support was most pronounced at one of the institutions because that city had suffered another crisis, a strong earthquake, in the second week of lockdown. All the teachers referred to this as an additional stressor for students and spoke about supporting them:

1) [...] there was an earthquake in [city]. I organised the first *Zoom* in those small groups first of all to hear how they were, to hear if they had any problems [...] My motivation for the first *Zoom* meeting was psychosocial support more than to discuss those translations. What could I expect from the translations when there was such an earthquake on Sunday morning? (P6)

Instrumental support (making himself available to students, dedicating his time to them) and emotional support are difficult to separate in this teacher’s comments:

2) Maybe that’s why it suited them to have one-on-one [sessions] because they had a feeling they could tell me things not strictly related to the topic but... One [student] told me she was experiencing anxiety, one told me she was not in [the university city] due to the earthquake and that sort of thing. I think it was OK... I’m not trained help or anything, but just to, I mean... If nothing else to let them know, OK, translation is not the most important thing right now. [...] I kind of put it in context. [...] It’s neither the time nor the place to be too strict. (P9)

With respect to instructional support, our participants felt that they had to compensate for the perceived “deficiencies” (P1, P4) of ERT, which could never “adequately replace face-to-face classes” (P2, P5), with students and teachers being “somehow harmed by” (P7) their absence. Whereas teachers’ perceptions of students’ material and emotional needs were partially based on student reports, providing instructional support was based primarily on the teachers’ perceptions of what they felt was inadequate in ERT.

Compensation took different forms, depending on whether classes were primarily asynchronous or synchronous, and depending on the type of course (see Section 4.1.). For example, at institution Z, where teachers relied more strongly on the asynchronous mode, students were given regular assignments via *Moodle* and provided

detailed individual feedback (Rapanta, Botturi, *et al.* 2020). In this we see compensation at work in two respects. Firstly, increased feedback (appraisal support) compensates for the perceived lack of adequate instructional support and, secondly, the perceived inability to provide group support is compensated for by increased individual support: "I think they actually profited the most from the detailed feedback they would get" (P5); "the feedback was detailed. Because everything that could not be done live was compensated for by this feedback." (P1)

Teachers who taught synchronously also missed the interaction that they were used to in physical classrooms (Şahin and Oral 2021:290; Ahrens, Beaton-Thome, *et al.* 2021): "The interaction was too slow. Sometimes there's a delay, a silence, there's nothing going on" (P8). They missed the immediate feedback of the classroom setting ("In the classroom you glance around and you know where you stand. You feel the energy, you leave either satisfied or know it was a disaster, and here I don't have that feeling" (P8)). The social presence that brings teachers and students together ("I miss that aspect of all of us being in it together, that not everyone is taking a study program individually" (P2)) was seen as absent in the online environment and attempts were made to recreate the sense of community: "That module, they are a sort of class, and I know they normally hang out together so it's kind of logical that I tried to create that" (P7).

As a result, two participants teaching theoretical courses felt responsible for student boredom due to the lack of interaction ("I tried to find ways to animate them, to make even the theoretical courses, which they find boring by default, less boring" (P8); "and the other course was kind of boring because I'd show them the PowerPoint, then turn it off and show myself and ask questions and they would chip in" (P7)). To increase engagement, they reverted to what was essentially the flipped classroom model:

3) I asked them to prepare in advance... to read something and write or ask questions... and it worked well, their reactions were positive. It is easier to follow the class if they are prepared in advance, they are more motivated. I'll do that in future, too. (P8)

4) The teacher as the authority was removed, and they got very good input from one another. (P7)

Providing opportunities for peer interaction through group assignments served not only as instructional support, but also served as emotional support:

5) ... to divide them into groups and make them get involved in a way, to connect, to see each other, meet on Skype or whatever and discuss the topic. Without me. I don't have to be there. [...] to encourage them to get together, share their experience and knowledge, and for all of us to remain sane and normal, you know? (P8)

The perceived inability to establish their teaching presence in the online medium seems to have caused at least some teachers to overcompensate by giving students additional work ("Yes, that had to be compensated somehow. For example, I really ... crushed them with work over the first few weeks" (P8)). Some teachers reported that students had complained about having more work than normal, whether for their or other teachers' courses.

As we have seen, two opposing principles were at work here: trying to promote what teachers felt was high quality learning by recreating the feeling of the familiar

classroom situation versus taking into consideration the objective difficulties that students had in ERT conditions. The resolution of this tension depended on each teachers' situation, with the teachers' own need for support playing a key role.

### 4.3. Support required by teachers

Participants identified the family, peers and the institution as the main sources of support. Peer and family support were seen as non-systematic. This was particularly true of family support, explicitly discussed by one group, and mentioned in the others in terms of the difficulties of working from home. It was recognised as an individual factor, which "depends on the personal circumstances" (P6). Balancing working from home with their family needs put a particularly significant strain on some teachers ("I found all of that really exhausting, having to balance it all." (P6)), particularly those with small or school-age children, as one teacher reports:

6) I don't have my own study where I can close the door and be alone for two or three hours, but I simply share my workspace with my wife, who also works at school and who had her own obligations. We also have a four-year-old, and the kindergarten didn't work so it was... You can imagine. (P2)

Two teachers decided to do primarily asynchronous work precisely because of these constraints, and one teacher's husband took days off from work when she had to teach synchronously. Thus, family support had a potentially significant impact on teaching.

Institutional support was recognised as a systematic factor and primarily seen in terms of instrumental support, as ensuring various technological preconditions for teaching online, including the availability of software (course management systems, video conferencing tools, translation software) and hardware (desktop computers, laptops, cameras), workspace and equipment at the university, as well as technical assistance. These issues were seen as significant by all the groups but, given that institutional support varied greatly from institution to institution, they were discussed to varying lengths and with different sentiments.

With respect to instructional support, all groups referred to the ways in which institutions provided, or failed to provide, help or training in the use of technological tools. Instruction regarding pedagogical aspects of online environments was not mentioned as part of institutional support by any of the participants, although various elements of integrating pedagogy and technology were discussed in terms of informal and peer support in two focus groups. Institutional guidelines, including top-down policy support, were mentioned as being available at one institution, discussed as missing at another and were not mentioned by the third group.

According to our participants, the three universities provided different levels of support – from support that was felt as insufficient to support that was felt as substantial. Teachers at Institution X thus reported that all major types of institutional support were lacking or insufficient. For instance, the decision to set up and use *Microsoft Teams*, in addition to *Moodle*, as the official learning platform was made too late, by which time some teachers had already started using other platforms that they had discovered by themselves ("So you have a whole range of platforms you're using, for this and that, it's quite chaotic, really." (P8)). This was exacerbated by unreliable infrastructure, making teaching difficult ("IT department told us that

everyone should not log in to [*Moodle*], because if everyone logs in, it won't work" (P3)). Teachers who could not work from home ("we don't have that many computers at home for everyone to use their own, or rooms" (P3)) were unable to work from the university, due to inadequate equipment ("our computers at the office don't have a web camera or a mike..." (P3)) and internet access was unreliable ("you can connect to *Eduroam*, maybe, if it works and if your office is not in the basement or something." (P3)). Two of the teachers describe this as being a "traumatic" experience (P3, P7).

Overall, the support from the IT department and the administration of that university was seen as not adequate or timely enough by our participants, who felt they were left to manage on their own. This was a recurrent theme:

7) When it comes to technical support I think we got a single email with some instructions... And the rest we had to find on the university website ourselves. (P7)

8) We were putting out the fire, putting out the fire. It was, "Deal with it, pal." (P8)

Participants from this institution felt that a more systematic top-down support should have been offered to counteract the feeling of abandonment at the onset of the emergency, providing emotional support and a "semblance of normality":

9) the situation we found ourselves in, someone should have responded and been the support to all of us, students and teachers. And [...] the idea of the academia as synergy and a kind of unity/togetherness [...] was completely absent, it was everyone for themselves. I think that this was where a kind of institutional, top-down support should have been given. (P7)

10) [...] send an email to everyone, ask, where are you, how are you [...] Let it be at least a semblance of normality. [...] I'm angry that it wasn't done in that way. (P7)

One teacher in particular felt that, if institutional support had been set up better in advance, the ERT situation could have been used to stimulate improvements. It could have been a "mechanism ... that would not encroach on the integrity of the teacher" but a way to "look up from what you are doing and perhaps see what someone else is doing" (P7), again stressing togetherness.

At Institution Z, teachers were generally satisfied with the infrastructure provided by the university. *Moodle* had been available for some time before the current crisis and teachers had already been using it. Some had also had experience with BBB. The institution purchased other necessary hardware and software on request (e.g., specialist software and *Zoom Pro*). People who did not have adequate working conditions at home could work from the university, where "everything was already set up so whoever wanted could work from there" (P5). Technical support was also satisfactory ("whatever I asked our technicians, they would resolve it ... so I'm quite satisfied with that, I must say" (P5)). Participants felt that institutional support was available, even if they themselves did not necessarily enact it ("I personally didn't need it, but we had it" (P2)).

Teachers had received some guidelines from the institution on teaching during the ERT situation, which were described as "general" and "basic" (P2), and not very helpful. However, teachers felt the institution could not have provided more specific guidelines on the global level, given the diversity of study programs and needs. Although the teachers in this group framed it positively, the lack of more engaged institutional support seems to have left them to their own devices:



11) I don't think the institution could have done much more, it was up to us to manage somehow. (P1)

12) I think we were all in the same boat, we all improvised, tried to manage in those new circumstances... (P2)

13) I'm not very technical-minded so I had to explore a lot on my own but I somehow managed. (P1)

When they needed additional support, teachers from this university turned to their colleagues, emphasising the notion of togetherness:

14) [...] but I talked to colleagues, we have a Viber group so we're in touch, we share experiences. [...] our department was kind of the biggest support to me, we went to each other for help [...] I think we're a pretty good team in that respect, and that was what helped me most of all. (P1)

15) [...] we were in touch on a daily basis to share experiences, who is doing what in what way, what works and what doesn't, why it doesn't, some tips, how to create an online test... Colleagues would help even with details and that was really supportive. (P5)

At Institution Y, teachers were happy with the support they had, which is why it was discussed less in this focus group. Instrumental support included good IT infrastructure ("[*Moodle*] worked perfectly from day one" (P4)), technical assistance and open communication channels with the institution's e-learning centre, including *Facebook* updates and two-way communication by email. The e-learning centre provided instructional support in the form of webinars and written instructions, mainly about how to make the most of *Moodle* and BBB. Support from the centre was mentioned by teachers as a crucial element ("We couldn't have done it without them" (P4)).

Even so, the support appeared to boil down to assistance with and instruction in the technical aspects. Again, judging by their comments, the participants in this group did not think there was anything more the institution could have provided. These teachers, who all had considerable experience with *Moodle*, wished that they had been more prepared for ERT, but also said that, if they had been offered a course in online technology before the pandemic, they might not have had time for it. They did not seem to miss their institution's instructional support concerning pedagogical aspects of online teaching, although this aspect of support appeared to be absent. The feeling of stress resulting from insufficient institutional support was mentioned by one participant, but unrelated to teaching. His position was up for review and, not getting any feedback from the institution, he felt stressed about it and unsure about his future. This group blamed the crisis situation and the abruptness of online transition, rather than the transition itself, for the feelings of stress and anxiety.

What is perhaps telling is that working from home was discussed as being a lonely experience. Some teachers said they were no strangers to being locked up at home since they (had) worked as freelance translators; they joked about that lifestyle being similar to a lockdown. They nevertheless mentioned missing regular contact with their colleagues, having a coffee after class and sharing experiences. In the case of this institution, it seems that the feeling of loneliness was not exacerbated by insufficient institutional support, possibly because of constant communication from the e-learning centre. Even so, the feeling was there.



Overall, the ERT context may have increased the need for institutional support, not only as a precondition for teaching but also as a way to counteract the feeling of abandonment or loneliness felt by the teachers regardless of the level of support the institution provided. At the same time, where support was given, teachers felt that it could not have been much different, possibly testifying to the teachers’ general expectations of their institutions within this type of university tradition. Not mentioned as part of potential institutional support was combining pedagogy and technology (Carrillo and Flores 2020: 478) or reflecting and collaborating with peers in an institution-generated context. Therefore, it seems that these teachers construe the institution as external to their work as teachers – as providing administrative and technical support, rather than as a community where standards of teaching excellence are co-constructed and enforced together. The community aspect, that is present when classes are held in physical classrooms and halls are bustling with students, appears not to have been successfully transferred in the ERT situation to build a virtual Community of Inquiry. This sheds a new light on the notion of “compensation” mentioned earlier: it may be motivated not only by wanting to support learning, but by trying to “imitate face-to-face classes” (P6) in order to recreate that “semblance of normalcy” (P7).

#### 4.4. Reflections on ERT and lessons learned

As Rapanta, Botturi, *et al.* (2020) also note, the initial hustle of the emergency online transition did not allow many teachers to reflect on what they were doing as they were doing it. They were too busy “putting out the fire” (P8), to quote one of our participants. However, at the end of the semester, when our focus groups took place, reflection resulted naturally from the fact that classes and exams were over and it was additionally stimulated by sharing in the focus groups.

Reflecting on their experience, all of the teachers said that ERT had involved harder work and increased cognitive effort (Breitenbach 2021: 12; Izquierdo, Caraveo Sandoral, *et al.* 2021). Working harder, under stressful circumstances and sometimes with insufficient support, had taken an emotional toll on the teachers. The ERT experience made them “more tired than usual” (P6), “traumatised” (P3), “worried” (P3, P4), “frustrated” (P3), “afraid” (P3, P5, P7); they suffered from the “emotional impact of the entire situation” (P9) and “general anxiety” (P9). The situation was exhausting because they felt that “they were juggling while running” (P9) and “putting out the fire” (P8). Some teachers said that sharing their experiences with others in the focus group was a way to boost their motivation and confidence, to learn about “paths that you did not even think about or were aware of, and which were at hand, because your colleagues were taking them” (P8). More than that, for some teachers, the group reflection was “a kind of therapy” (P7), making the emotional burden of the situation lighter by realising that others had similar experiences, a point in which they “found some sort of comfort” (P1).

Looking to the future, even when unprompted, our participants reported lessons learned both for their immediate practice and beyond. For many, lessons learned brought students (back) to the centre of the learning process (Ahrens, Beaton-Thome, *et al.* 2021). One teacher thus said that, in the future, he would make sure to maximise meaningful interactions with students, rather than “stand and talk, and [have stu-

dents] listen” (P2). This wish to make the most of “face time” was incited by what the teacher experienced as most acutely missing in his ERT practice. This sentiment was echoed by a participant in another focus group, who had missed the joint construction of knowledge:

16) I became aware [that] I particularly like, when doing translation exercises is [...] a democratic conversation... [With that absent] I have an impression that it comes from a position of authority [...] and that this makes learning worse. [...] I have an impression [...] that [students] feel better and remember things better if they go through their own [process of argumentation]. (P9)

The group who had relied more strongly on asynchronous delivery said that, with the benefit of hindsight, they would have had more regular synchronous contact with students, but also stressed the benefits of the asynchronous mode for learner autonomy. A teacher from Institution X highlighted the importance of both interaction and learner autonomy as two seemingly contradictory facets of learning that should nevertheless go hand in hand:

17) What I like in this whole thing is that [students] are a bit more independent than they were. I have a feeling that [normally] everything is served to them in class [...] and in this way they have to put in a bit more effort. [...] I liked this aspect of it, and I think that I will keep it, this independence. But then also the interaction. Things should be carefully balanced so that [both aspects are represented] as much as possible. (P8)

Importantly, two teachers felt that the ERT experience had a transformative potential for their later teaching:

18) Perhaps [...] we will not require them to cram facts, but to reflect more, perhaps this is a good lesson for us, if not to change, then at least to include other types of teaching and try to evolve from this, all of us together. (P8)

19) [What] could be added to the positives is that I believe that all of us working at universities get a bit lazy after a while, we have our methods that function, usual ways of doing things, and this has, I believe, made us question that a bit, change certain things. ... In my view, this is a very significant advance. (P7)

## 5. Conclusion and implications

This study investigated three groups of university translation teachers and their overnight transition to the online environment due to a global emergency. It aimed to shed light on the various factors at play in that process. The notion of social support given and received by teachers was crucial among those factors. Despite the limitations of the study, the chief one being the lack of input from other relevant stakeholders (students, administrators), which would enable data triangulation, we believe the results to be relevant for university translator education in future emergencies involving educational disruption. They are likely to resonate most in settings with a similar university tradition that emphasises teacher autonomy and a less pronounced role of institutions. In this section, we summarise the key take-aways.

The main observation was that some learning outcomes of translation training can be achieved in an ERT context without major adjustments in learning activities, mainly because they already make use of online communication channels to mimic typical workflows of professional translation. Provision of feedback, which involves

teachers revising and commenting on student translations, is not likely to suffer from an online transition, however abrupt and unplanned. Nevertheless, more collaborative types of knowledge construction, including group discussions of specific translation tasks or of theoretical translation topics, which foster the acquisition of metacognitive skills, require more effort to succeed in ERT circumstances. The advantages of asynchronous activities – flexibility, learner autonomy – and those of synchronous activities – immediate student-student and teacher-student interaction – have the most to offer when skilfully combined to suit each type of learning content, in the opinion of our participants.

As we have seen, ERT prompted the translation teachers in this study to recognise and/or reassert that learning primarily happened in a social situation. The affordances of online technologies, seen as different from face-to-face environments, brought into stark relief what was felt as missing in ERT. Providing more/different support than in a typical classroom situation meant that teachers had to rethink and re-evaluate their practices, which in turn had an impact not only on their ERT, but a potential impact on their future practice. Therefore, the ERT situation created an impetus for our participants to go back to what they consider essential when teaching: supporting and facilitating student learning. From their perspective, ERT was thus not “a temporary shift of instructional delivery to an alternate delivery mode due to crisis circumstances” (Hodges, Moore, *et al.* 2020: para. 13), but rather what Timperley (2008: 15) calls an opportunity “to make significant changes to their practice” or what Rapanta, Botturi, *et al.* (2020: 941) describe as a “catalyst that highlighted the need for educational change.”

However, to be able to enact that change at a stressful time and emerge from the process as better professionals, translation teachers (and teachers in general) need support from their institutions, even in settings which traditionally place a higher premium on teacher independence. The question that arises is what institutions could do better the next time to provide more substantial support and prevent teachers from feeling left to fend for themselves during an educational disruption. Based on our results, the following recommendations can be made:

1. At institutions with a strong tradition of teacher autonomy, top-down directives or even guidelines that are uniform to all might not be welcome since they might be perceived as intrusive and controlling. In an emergency situation, this might increase stress levels in teachers rather than help them, possibly leading to non-compliance. Strict university policies may have a detrimental effect on the smooth transition to online environments (Krouglov 2021: 48). Solutions that take teacher autonomy into account and foster freedom of choice are likely to work better.
2. Institutions could provide teachers with instruction on how to support students in crises without taking on the role of mental health professionals, for which they are not trained (Anonymous 2019). Stronger support to students directly from the institution would also be welcome, not instead of teacher support but in addition to it.
3. Institutions should provide multiple training options for teachers, taking into account their different learning needs (depending on previous experience, skill level, specificities of their type of course/study program etc.). Instrumental and instructional support from the institution should not be restricted to technical aspects, although a strong technical base (the provision of workspaces, hardware, software and instruction in how to use technological solutions) is essential. Training opportunities should additionally relate the affordances of technology to

pedagogy (Rapanta, Botturi, *et al.* 2020; Carrillo and Flores 2020: 478). Interventions should be organised in a timely manner.

4. When it comes to training teachers for/during emergencies, an important medium that we have seen underused at our participants' institutions is teacher collaboration. While teachers may resent being told what to do by administrators, they are likely to welcome institution-created opportunities to engage in collegial collaboration with their peers. If such groups are "instructionally focused" (Woodland and Mazur 2019: 64), with clear goals and bringing together teachers with similar interests, they could efficiently respond to any specific needs teachers might face at a given point. As was the case in our focus groups, in an emergency situation, such peer groups are likely to serve not only as a source of instrumental and instructional but also emotional support, and may compensate for the lack of physical contact with colleagues that happens spontaneously during non-emergency periods. In other words, the same reasons teachers in our study believed peer-to-peer interaction would be good for their students in emergencies – to meet their learning and emotional needs – are the reasons why peer groups would be excellent venues for teachers. The role of the institution would be to facilitate the harnessing of this powerful source of support, especially since recent research (e.g., Woodland and Mazur 2019) suggests that, despite the tradition of teacher autonomy, administrators can play a leading role in creating opportunities for such collaboration.

This last point situates the present study within a larger discussion on institutional responsibility for and support to teachers' professional development (Rapanta, Botturi, *et al.* 2020), not only during ERT and not only for translation teachers. Synthesising research evidence on the topic, Timperley (2008: 15; emphasis added) identifies two preconditions that have to be met if teachers are to make significant changes in their practice: they "need to have their current practice *challenged* and to be *supported* as they make changes." The ERT situation is certainly well suited to satisfying the first requirement: the challenge. The second condition – an environment of support and trust – is up to the institutions to provide. To what extent they will use the lessons learned from this crisis to better rise to the challenge in the remainder of this and in the next educational disruption remains to be seen.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank our participants in the three institutions, who so willingly and openly discussed their practice with us. We would also like to thank the two anonymous reviewers for their constructive comments which enabled us to improve our work. All remaining inadequacies are our own.

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## APPENDIX

The core set of questions used in the focus groups:

1. Instruction.
  - a. Please describe how your classes were organised in this semester. What adaptations, if any, did you make in the current situation?
  - b. Did you adjust the content of your courses in any way? What about your teaching methods? How? Why (not)?
  - c. Did you work in a synchronous or asynchronous way or both? Which worked better for you and why?
2. Assessment.
  - a. How did you organise your assessment? In what way was it different than usual, if at all? Did it work? What were the pros and cons compared to your usual practice?
3. Students.
  - a. What was your interaction with students like? What were the main obstacles, if any? How did you overcome them?
  - b. Do you feel that students were engaged as much as usual/less/more? If less, did you try to provide additional support? In what way? Why (not)?
4. Teachers.
  - a. What kind of support did you have? Did you feel it was sufficient? What else might you have needed in terms of support?
  - b. To what extent did you feel prepared for this situation? What, if anything, helped you to be prepared? What do you wish you had done in advance to be better prepared? What would you do differently now, with the benefit of hindsight?
5. General impressions and lessons learned.
  - a. What was your general impression of this semester? What was the most challenging aspect for you? What were you most satisfied with?
  - b. Was there anything in this experience that you could apply to your future face-to-face work?
6. Is there anything we haven't talked about that you'd like to comment on or ask?