

ERL online session:

*COVID-A source of threat or opportunity for linguistic education?*

March 4th 2021

**Exploring teachers'  
verbal resources and  
strategies for building  
rapport in COVID-  
emergency online  
university courses: some  
preliminary ideas**

**María Sol Iparraguirre & Laura Eisner**

*Universidad Nacional de Río Negro  
Centro de Estudios del Lenguaje, la Literatura, su  
Aprendizaje y su Enseñanza (CELLAE)  
Río Negro, Argentina*

# Changes in the educational system under COVID-19 lockdown in Argentina



Remote teaching from March to December 2020 (entire school year in Argentina)

Aims of this presentation:

- briefly describe pandemic education in Argentina
- discuss some preliminary ideas for a research study on teacher-student relationships in remote education at university during 2020, focused on how university teachers in our region communicated with their students in order to create and foster positive rapport and of group bonding
- describe one of the research instruments (questionnaire) we are designing

Also...

- learn about different experiences with language in emergency remote education in different local contexts around the world
- receiving other colleagues' feedback during the session
- exploring possibilities for future collaboration

The context in which we work at the *Universidad Nacional de Río Negro*

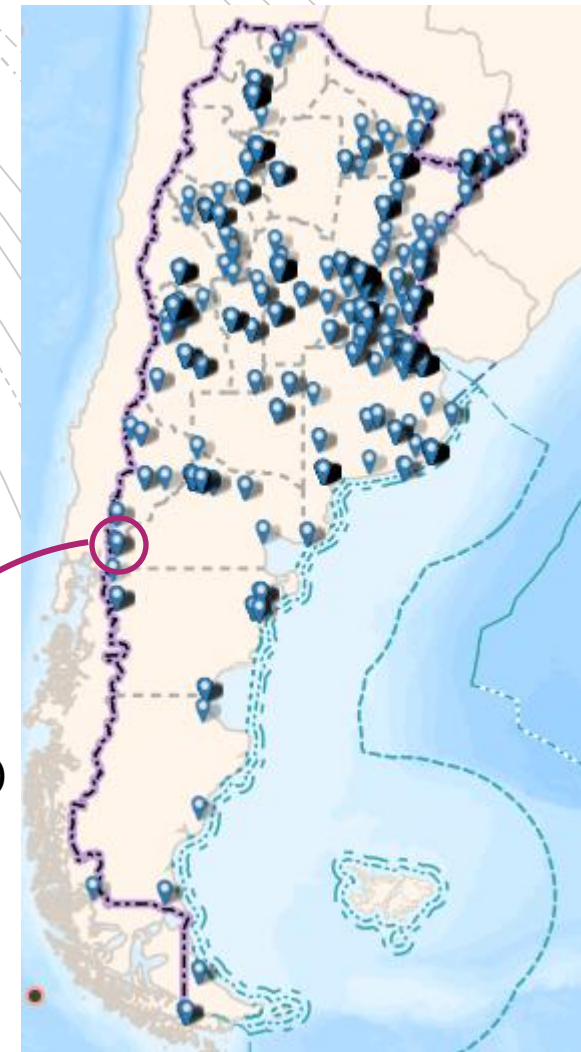
In this context, an inclusive perspective in higher education is part of a political and ethical stance, addressing unfavorable conditions in the students' situations, both personal (such as a disability) and socioeconomic (such as low family income).

Brief description of the Argentinian education system

- education is public, free and compulsory from kindergarten to the end of secondary school (13 years in all)
- Most of the population attends state schools and universities
- State universities: tuition-free, rooted in local community, prestigious

Universidad Nacional de Río Negro (UNRN)

- large number of “first generation” university students and adult students (due to geographical, economic, and sociocultural factors)
- student population with diverse literacy trajectories  
↓
- university → new “community of practice” (reading and writing)



## Educational management during the pandemic in Argentina

- The pandemic started in Argentina during our summer break (mid Dec-January) and quickly gained strength as of February 2020.
- Just one week after the beginning of the school year, national authorities decided to switch to emergency remote education teaching at all levels (along with other physical and social distancing measures).
- Virtual education, instead of ensuring the continuity of learning, generated the deepening of **SOCIAL INEQUALITIES** already existing in our country.

connectivity + access to digital devices

Technological difficulties in a deeply unequal society such as ours meant that the responsibility for generating ways to establish and maintain bonding in remote education relied heavily on the personal strategies deployed by teachers to keep in touch with his or her students.

In contexts of social vulnerability, the consequence was disruption and even total blockage of teaching rapport.

Switching to virtual teaching and learning meant building a new practice mediated by screens

### coexistence of multiple

- **teaching resources** (oral and written explanations, multiple choice, questionnaires, slides, audiovisual productions),
- **platforms** (e-mail, blogs, forums, Meet, Zoom, GoogleDrive, Whatsapp, Padlets, Facebook, virtual campus)
- **devices** (computers, tablets, smartphones and cell phones)

for the adaptation of contents  
+  
teaching, learning and evaluation activities

- unequal technological and connectivity possibilities of those sharing the same class
- degree of familiarity of teachers with these technologies

How can teachers create and maintain teacher-student rapport and group identity in technology-mediated communication at the university, in a context when virtuality was an on-the-spot solution for a 100% face-to-face educational system?

## Teacher-student rapport during emergency remote education

### A CHANGE LAB...

- Switch to virtual education was an opportunity for developing and appropriating new linguistic resources - and refunctionalizing others- for rapport building in technology-mediated contexts
- Although home-based has caused teachers to feel "dislocated" regarding our usual ways of communicating with our students in our teaching role, it has also allowed us to distance ourselves from them and to adopt a more analytical view of our own practices.
- Virtual interactions, being primarily one-to-one and easy to retrieve, provide an opportunity for collecting and analysing these communicative exchanges, thus creating favorable conditions for research.

## **TRACES**

We believe that this experience will leave deep traces in both teachers and students, promoting changes in our ways of teaching and learning, even when a complete return to face-to-face learning is achieved.

## **POST-PANDEMIC EDUCATION**

Because of this, we believe that a deeper understanding of its impact will contribute to outlining the features of post-pandemic education, with a view to building more inclusive societies and propose powerful new educational approaches to help reduce the social inequalities that have become painfully apparent under the pandemic.

**Why is it an interesting or important issue?**

# Research questions

- What communicative aspects of teacher-student relationship and group bonding have changed in remote education compared to face-to-face education?
- What semiotic resources did participants deploy in technology-mediated interactions in order to build teacher-student rapport and group bonding in remote education?
- What elements of interaction did teachers and students describe, from their perspective, as creating or fostering positive rapport?
- Which of these elements promote student autonomy and engagement with learning in higher education?



# Methodological issues

- Exploratory study → our findings can't be generalized, but could be transferred to similar socio-educational contexts
- Situated approach
- First-person perspective
- Participants: university teachers and students (initially at UNRN, Argentina, but could be extended to other universities).
- Instruments for data collection:
  - a (small) survey with separate questionnaires for students and teachers
  - in-depth interviews with some of the teachers and students who have answered the questionnaire
  - a corpus with samples of verbal exchanges between teachers and students in 2020 (ideally a case study with access to virtual classroom).
- Methods of analysis (under construction 😊):
  - lexicometry
  - category analysis
  - interactional sociolinguistic analysis
  - more to come...

# Mensajes

Buscar mensajes

- Ay. Jazmin Garcia**  
Hola Lau... como estuviero...
- Ailén Stefania VELAQUEZ**  
Hola Laura, con Ana tene...
- Fernando E...**  
las presentaciones se hace...
- JUAN MARCO**  
Listo, ya entre en el meet
- DAZNER NARELLA**  
Tú: Hola Narella, ayer vi tu...
- Génesis Edith**  
Buenísimo , gracias

**Ailén Stefania VELAQUEZ** Editar

Hola Laura, desde el día 18 no tenemos internet, por unos problema económicos de casa, ahora estoy vendiendo platas para los datos de mi celular y el de mi hermana. Recién hoy puedo entrar al campus. para no perderme.... ¿el 30 es el día de la primera entrega de la monografía?  
Vi que estoy regularizada, estoy muy contenta. También vi los materiales que me mandó y la entrega del resumen con las notas. Muchas gracias.  
Saludos!  
12:44

Hola Ailén, qué lío lo de Internet! Espero que ya esté más o menos solucionado. El 30-11, o como mucho el 1-12, es la fecha de entrega del primer borrador, con lo que hayas podido avanzar (que ya debería incluir los ejemplos de usos de Facebook o whatsapp que vas a analizar). Si tenés alguna duda y necesitás que nos encontremos, podemos probar con el programa Big Blue Button, que no consume datos porque está dentro del aula virtual. Un abrazo!  
15:45

Mica

Buen día profe

Te llamo?

Dale

27 DE MAYO DE 2020 A LAS 13:09

**El videochat finalizó.**  
53 min 53 s, 27 de mayo de 2020 a las 13:09  
LLAMAR DE NUEVO

3 DE JULIO DE 2020 A LAS 19:04

Hola Mica, estás?

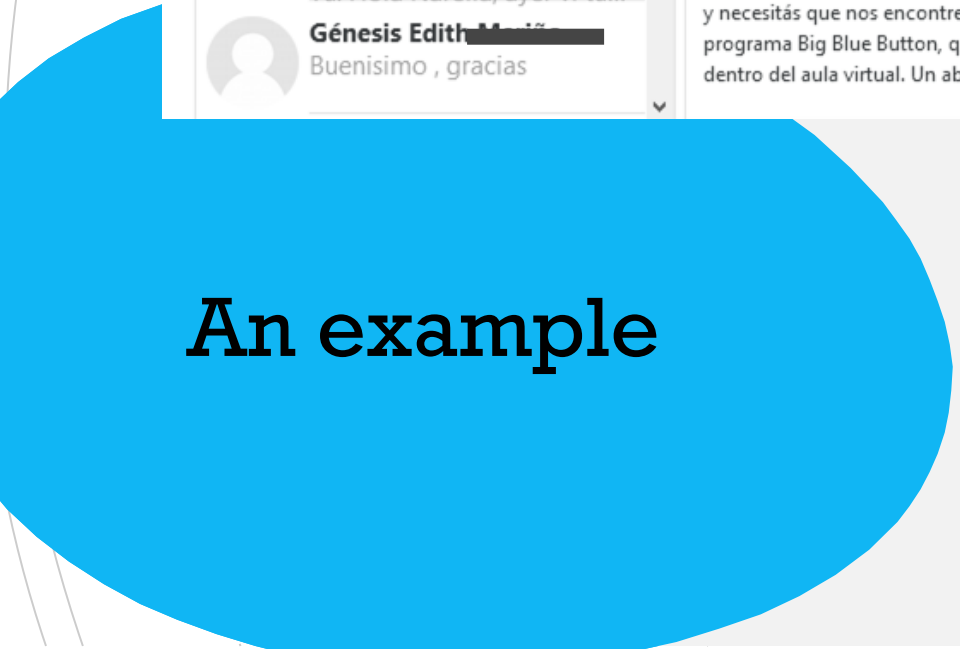
Hola profe! Si ya estoy

te llamo

se suma alguien más?

Shia me dijo que eligió a otro autor y Sofi nunca me contestó

listo, vamos nosotras entonces




An example

**Developing an inquiry instrument:  
Questionnaire for teachers**



**QUESTIONNAIRE**  
for **TEACHERS**



## Exploring teachers' verbal resources and strategies for building rapport in COVID-emergency online university courses

The impact of COVID-19 pandemic emergency in 2020 led to a sudden change in the educational conditions at University during the whole academic year. In this context we are conducting a research study to learn more about teacher-student communication during that period, focusing on issues of rapport and engagement and on the enhancement of group bonding in university courses.

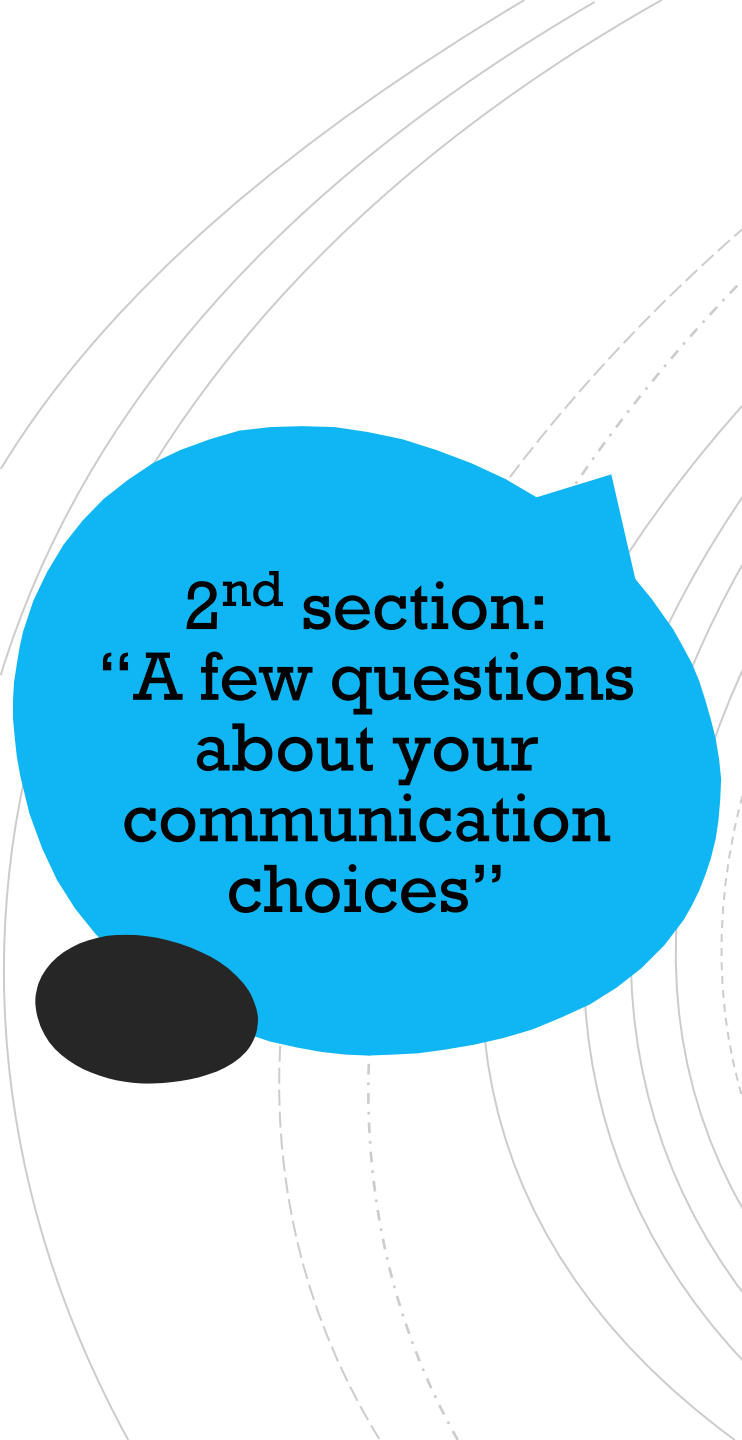
We invite you to share your views on your 2020 experiences by completing the questionnaire you'll find below. We hope this survey will contribute to the design of new more effective strategies for teacher-student communication in remote education contexts. All data will be held securely and will not be distributed to third parties to ensure your anonymity.

[institutional and contact details]



**1<sup>st</sup> section:  
“Contact details”**

- *How would you like to be addressed ?  
(name or nickname)*
- *Gender*
- *Age*
- *Department*
- *Where is the subject you teach located in  
the course structure?*



**2<sup>nd</sup> section:**  
**“A few questions  
about your  
communication  
choices”**

- *Which platforms or applications did you find most suitable to communicate/keep in touch with your students during the period of remote education due to the lockdown?*
- *Why did you choose them?*
- *Which were the main reasons for communicating with students beyond online lessons?*
- *How often did students initiate these interactions?*

**3<sup>rd</sup> section:  
“Your  
communication  
experience in times  
of remote  
education”**

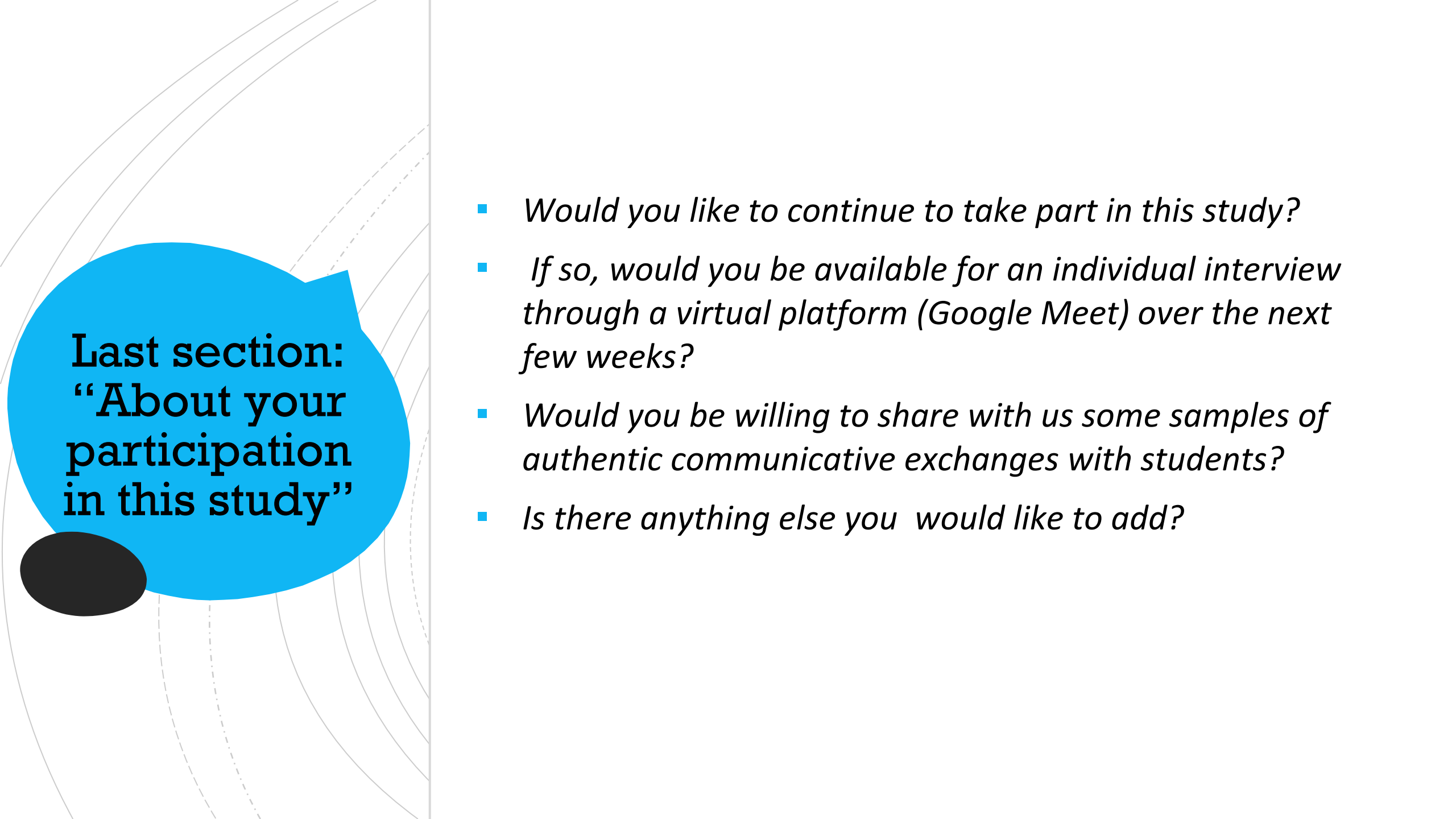
“We’d now like you to think of a specific communicative experience with a student over the last year which you found particularly satisfying, regarding the way the interaction unfolded and/or its positive effects, e.g. the student was able to reconsider a topic /activity, you discovered new ways of tackling a particular topic in your syllabus, your rapport with that student improved, the student was able to solve any difficulties regarding his/her approach to academic work, you felt it contributed to your teaching, etc.”

- *Please describe the event providing as much detail as possible, including any previous actions that might be relevant in order to situate the interaction in context. Anything you can remember, including your feelings and perceptions at the time, will be of great interest.*

**4<sup>th</sup> section:  
“Considering  
this specific  
event:”**

- *The exchange was mainly oral or written? Was there any blending of oral and written modes? What media did you use (e-mail, virtual campus, telephone, social networks)? How did you use each of them and what for?*
- *What were your goals during that communicative event?*
- *Do you recall using any specific linguistic resources (words, expressions, intonation, graphics, etc.)? What was the effect of these on the communicative event? Why? Was there any change in your actions or the student's after that moment? If you can remember any specific example, please tell us.*
- *What were the positive effects of this experience for you? And for your student? In what ways did it contribute to the student's level of achievement, your relationship with him/her, your own way to approach a certain topic or unit in your syllabus, etc.?*
- *If a new teacher were to join the staff this year, what would you recommend him/her to do regarding aspects such as rapport management, communicative resources, media, strategies you would advise them to use (or not to use) in remote education?*





**Last section:  
“About your  
participation  
in this study”**

- *Would you like to continue to take part in this study?*
- *If so, would you be available for an individual interview through a virtual platform (Google Meet) over the next few weeks?*
- *Would you be willing to share with us some samples of authentic communicative exchanges with students?*
- *Is there anything else you would like to add?*

**Thanks in advance  
for your feedback**

Contact:

[msiparraguirre@unrn.edu.ar](mailto:msiparraguirre@unrn.edu.ar)

[leisner@unrn.edu.ar](mailto:leisner@unrn.edu.ar)

Acknowledgments: This study receives financial support from PI 40-B-800 “Prácticas, trayectorias y sentidos de la escritura en jóvenes y adultos: perspectivas socioculturales y discursivas”, Universidad Nacional de Río Negro.