



ENGLISH SCHOOL

IMPACT REPORT 2020

by Rhoda van Schalkwyk, English School Manager



OVERVIEW

The first term of classes at our centre in Commercial Street in the heart of Cape Town was aborted when the pandemic, with concomitant restrictions, was announced in March 2020. The pandemic forced on us the opportunity to teach students who could not be in our classes. We segued from teaching classes locally to teaching by WhatsApp across the continent, and further.

We converted the lesson guidelines to WhatsApp texts with links to free lessons so that students could learn by WhatsApp texts and voice notes. A pilot was run offering classes to the students in the aborted in-person classes. The outcome was predictably low since the goalposts had been moved during the game. These lessons were designed to be sent as images to the cellphones of our students. Registration was opened online and class placements were done telephonically. The English School, operating by virtual private network, and using only two cellphones and computers, became the fulcrum for teaching English as a foreign language to hundreds of migrants throughout Africa, and even further afield. Many of our students told us that they were embracing the opportunity to study with us as a means of coping with the mental challenges of the lockdown.

A pilot term, followed by two subsequent terms of eight weeks each, showed an increasing percentage of successful students, where success was defined as students completing at least 50% of homework tasks. To provide evidence of learning, homework tasks were given for each lesson. Individual and collective feedback to homework by trained and inducted teachers was sent out promptly: a 48-hour cycle to send a lesson, receive homework and give feedback allowed for two lessons a week to be sent to each of the classes at the eight levels taught. By the end of the year, 73% of registered students were meeting the criteria to receive participation certificates.

OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITIES

English lessons to assist migrants with the language skills needed for integration into our society moved from the geographic base in Cape Town, to anywhere, quite literally. The greatest achievement of this year was that we converted our lesson guidelines to text and then images for sending out on WhatsApp. Where we had been teaching in Cape Town, 2020 saw the English School teaching from Cape Town.

The English School continued to attract many literacy candidates, who were coaxed towards speaking English by sending back little voice notes to the teacher. Very simple scripts became the foundation for basic conversations in English. The lessons were based on the literacy materials of South Africa's Kha Ri Gude programme. The literacy classes continue to be oversubscribed every term we open a registration. Literacy classes received four lessons per week, providing intensive input and demanding reciprocal uptake through the daily homework tasks.

The "other classes", meaning non-literacy classes where testing was previously done, ran twice a week through WhatsApp groups set up for the different levels. All learning happened collectively, although students were individually tracked and responded to, in line with the principles of collaborative adult learning. At least half of all homework had to be credibly submitted and an exit conversation with a teacher, against the placement rubric, was conducted with each student to award participation certificates citing conversational skill evaluations.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Both literacy and other levels of English were taught to students in WhatsApp groups by using bespoke WhatsApp texts, voice notes and open licence material to students off-site. The singular success of the English School during 2020 was to teach interested migrants, regardless of place of residence. See the map indicating the country of residence during study with the English School.
- 2020 has shown that our teaching is in increasing demand, with a rise number of registration per term. There is also an increasing number of student who successfully meet course completion criteria and receive certificates.
- The nurturing of partnerships with kindred organisations has resulted in a partner, Fisantekraal Centre for Development, adopting our placement rubrics for some of their courses, and also prescribing the completion of a Scalabrini English course before their job readiness certificates are awarded.
- The English School is in conversation with the language schools of the Immigrant Welcome Center of Indianapolis, and through them nationally in the USA, to exchange curriculum and expertise.
- The challenge to give professional account of work and to provide evidence of learning, has resulted in the design of operational templates and the design of a curriculum for teaching off-site by WhatsApp. The pandemic has resulted in an English School that is replicable, with most administration happening online. Slick as this might sound, The English School nurtures human, particularly spoken contact, with students. This is facilitated by a network of skilled teachers, on whose shoulders we stand.

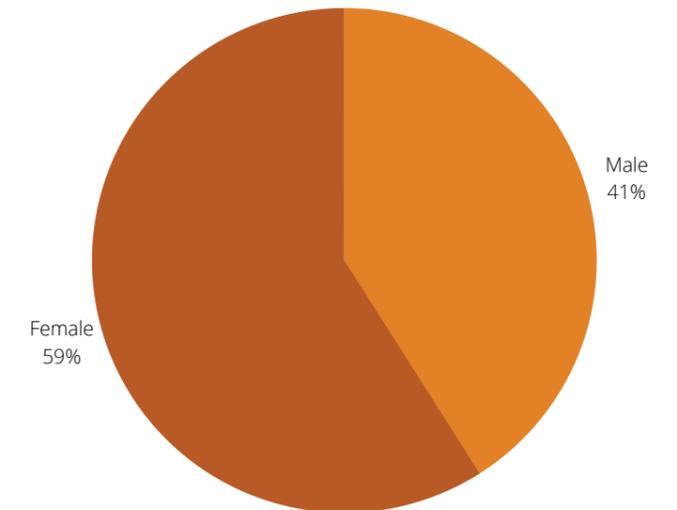
IMPACT

Average number of students attending English classes per term (3 terms)

320

Average percentage of students successfully completing the term

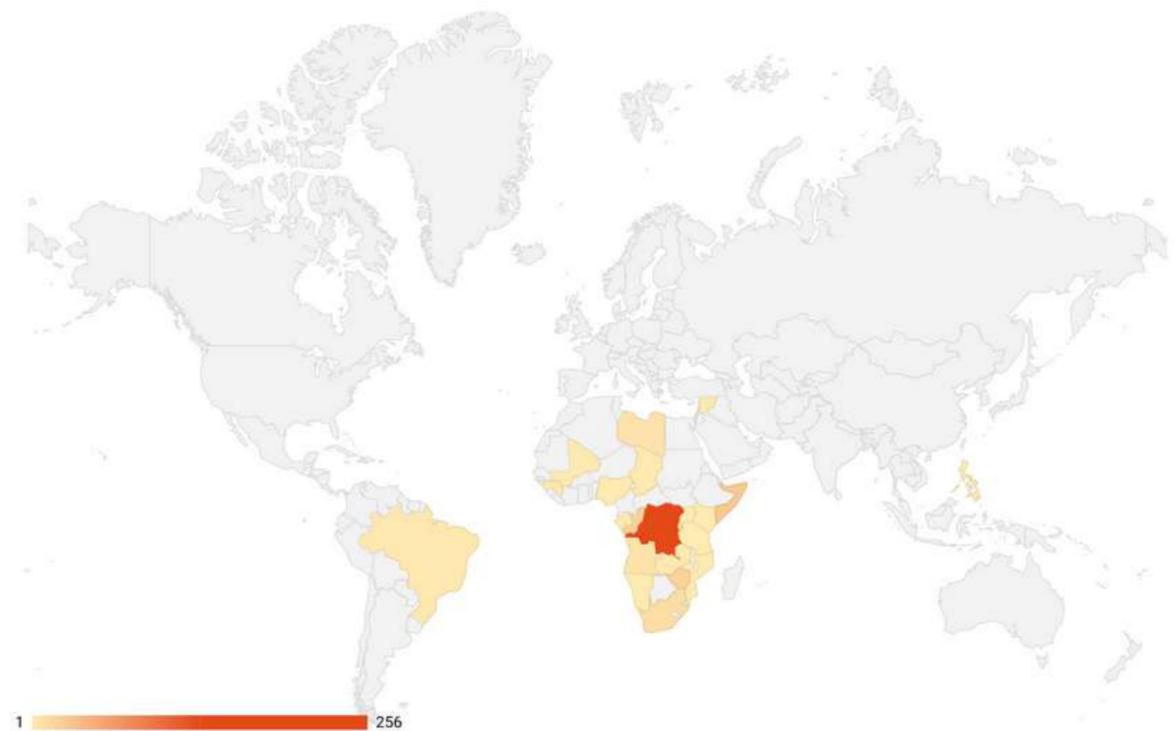
57%



Places of residence during study with the English school during 2020

Country or Origin	No. of Students
DRC	256
Somalia	28
Congo	22
Burundi	20
Zimbabwe	20
South Africa	13
Angola	8
Libya	7
Rwanda	4
Brazil	3
Gabon	2
Guinea	2
Mali	2
Mozambique	2
Nigeria	2
Syria	2
Chad	2
Kenya	1
Namibia	1
Philippines	1
Tanzania	1
Uganda	1
Zambia	1
Unknown	35

TOTAL STUDENTS 436



A BUTTERFLY EFFECT:

HOW ENGLISH SCHOOL'S WHATSAPP CLASSES CONTRIBUTED TO RESEARCH ON MINING AND INDIGENOUS RIGHTS IN BRAZIL

Adriana, who is based in Brazil, studies transitional justice and the impact of mining companies on indigenous people in the Amazon. When she came to Cape Town to compare the findings of her research in Brazil with indigenous people from Southern Africa, she realized that her abilities in English were hindering the research. This realization led her to Scalabrini's English School – which opened up her world to the melting pot of South Africa.

FROM PORTUGUESE AND SPANISH, TO ENGLISH

When Adriana arrived in Cape Town, she only knew basic greetings and how to say 'thank you'. Like many people in South Africa, English was to be her third language. "I was born close to Venezuela, so for me, learning and speaking Spanish was easier. It is similar to Portuguese. English is different to other languages and is difficult to learn."

English is not a common language in Brazil and is mostly spoken by the younger generations. Language has been an important part of Adriana's research. "When Brazil was colonized, it was forbidden to speak other languages. Even the indigenous people in Brazil cannot speak their indigenous languages. There are 174 different languages in Brazil. Only the indigenous people who live inside their own tribes speak their indigenous languages...In South Africa, people speak their own languages. It's not like this in Brazil. If these people die, we will lose those languages."

MEETING NEW PEOPLE

Adriana and her family lived in Cape Town for two years. In the beginning this proved difficult because of the language barrier, but through her lessons with English School, Adriana improved her English abilities enough to be able to communicate easily. "[speaking English] provided me with the most important thing that I need – to speak to people and understand. I am not scared about talking to people anymore". Before English School, Adriana was very shy to try and communicate in English, but she now has the confidence to use the language

English School helped Adriana build on, not only her speaking skills, but her writing and reading too. "Because of that, I was able to contact people across Africa. I now have a group of people that I discuss all the readings of different genocides with, as well as my other findings."

Adriana has found both similarities and differences between the indigenous populations in Southern Africa and Latin America. "Across the world, there has been a refusal to recognise the crimes against humanity {with regards to indigenous populations}." Adriana has found similar practices in Africa and Latin America with the "illegal appropriation of labour, lands and resources from the communities." The differences are centered around reparations. Where in Latin America, the judicial process is looking at individual reparations, the African concept – in some countries – "is about collective reparations and building the memory."

AN EMERGENCY EXIT TO BRAZIL – AND CONTINUING TO LEARN ENGLISH ONLINE

Adriana and her family left South Africa just before Level 5 lockdown in South Africa. They made the decision to go home because her step-son back home in Brazil fell ill. He sadly passed away from Covid-19 before his symptoms were understood.

When the pandemic hit South Africa, English School needed to adapt to be able to continue. English classes were moved online – this enabled Adriana to continue her English studies online. "It was not the same, but I loved it. English School still provided us with lessons and sent us links to watch some videos, they also helped us with our writing." Adriana was able to complete her course with English School via WhatsApp.

Adriana now hopes to begin learning her fourth language – French – in order to continue her research of the indigenous people of the Democratic Republic of Congo.



LOOKING FORWARD...

The increasing demand for classes for literacy-challenged and students with limited English-speaking skills prompts us to plan a hybrid operation for the coming year. The WhatsApp classes will continue, allowing for three terms of eight weeks. Small, socially-distanced classes for literacy candidates will run for three terms of twelve weeks because the experience of 2020 has shown us, not unexpectedly, that these students need our teaching most.

In conclusion - Our regular survey of students confirms that we are serving a real need. By adapting we continue to create opportunities, albeit by cellphones, to give voice and the cultural capital of speaking English to migrants in Cape Town and further afield.



The centre is registered with the South African Department of Social Development as a non-profit organisation (021-079 NPO), as a youth and child care centre (C7569) and as a Public Benefit Organisation with the South African Revenue Services (930012808) and governed by a Trust (IT2746/2006).
Auditors: CAP Chartered Accountants.

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