

The Indispensable Role Of Ict In Language Learning During The Covid 19 Pandemic

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Abstract-The aim of this paper is to understand the indispensable role of ICT tools in language learning during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic in the Indian context. This paper shall list out the various tools and resources that have been used and can be used to facilitate language learning via the online mode. Teachers' sentiments and opinions towards the use of technology and experience differ from one another. The pandemic has created a revolution in Indian higher education scene, because there was a lot of opposition on the educators' part towards adoption of technology and learners' commitment towards this paradigm shift in instruction. Due to the situation, most of the higher education in India have widely adopted technology and the involvement of learners is more than the regular engagement of the class. The lockdown has accelerated adoption of digital technology. Edtech start-ups, educational institutes, IT solution providers, data management and learning management systems have been compelled to work hand in hand to counter the pandemic and deliver turnkey solutions for the education sector to function seamlessly. This is an ideal time to experiment and deploy new resources to impart meaningful education to learners who can't go to campuses. It's a golden opportunity to be more structured, methodical and fruitful while developing new and improved professional skills/knowledge through online teaching and assessment. It is also a fact that use of technology in education is resulting in different concepts in the system, for instance the move from teacher-centric education to student-centric education.
KEYWORDS: *language learning, ICT, tools and resources, learners*

1. INTRODUCTION

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, higher education institutions, universities, polytechnics, have no choice but to switch to online mode of education. Teachers, whether new or experienced, have a few days to build their online course. The wealth of information risks losing more than helping mitigate this crisis.

The Covid 19 pandemic is spectacular by its magnitude which has gradually affected the entire planet, by its severity and by the sheer speed of its spread. What happened was predictable and will happen again in the future.

In today's society, the use of the Internet is omnipresent in all trades, a little less in public services and curiously less so in education, as if the education sector wanted to stay out of society. People's digital practices concern their private as well as their professional lives and the gap between these two fields has been reduced. Finally, teleworking and videoconferencing are becoming a common

phenomenon in all sectors, the current crisis clearly highlights this.

2. BEFORE THE COVID-19 CRISIS

Before the crisis that just broke out, what resources did students have to ensure their education? First of all, formal education, that forms a part of our primary and secondary schools, it is, in general, what is called "the School". To this was added websites available on the Internet (free or paid), blogs and social networks, not to mention the informal uses of the Internet that take up a lot of students' time (games, videos, music etc.).

There was very little distance learning on the initiative of teachers, except on the part of those few, who practice forms of flipped classrooms or bring in some form of innovation to their classes. Often young (but not always) and dynamic, they are isolated in the middle of others. For each pupil, all these possibilities were juxtaposed one with the other, in proportions depending on each family, while nobody took care of the coherence and the relevance of the whole; some parents did it a little, but strangely never the professionals.

3. WHERE WERE WE AT THE BEGINNING OF THIS CRISIS?

The situation created by containment is without real precedent. After the pandemic hit, educational institutes had to be shut with immediate effect and all of the formal part of teaching had to be done remotely via online mode. As it is said, the School is no longer in the School, but at home. The formal school is the most destabilized. Technical problems (initially, some teachers said: "it's a pain"!) and even more educational challenges that this situation poses, are numerous and far from being resolved. They affect the professional practices of teachers, the tools available and the different uses that the Internet allows.

All students do not yet have the required access at home, except through their phones (which sometimes only receives 3G and even worse) and above all it is not a suitable working tool, it is better suited for games and communication. Many do not have a laptop or do not have the financial means to buy one.

It is often ignored in the cities, there remain in the country a large number of rural areas, without access to mobile networks and without Internet. So, for their inhabitants, broadband is a distant dream! This leads people to sometimes travel several kilometers to access a location where the Internet is accessible and possibilities to photocopy or scan a document. I know that this is not representative of the whole country, but cannot be ignored by the public authorities. Finally, another problem to be considered: when in the family home there is only one computer, not necessarily recent and the parents, even the older children, telecommute and that there can be several children of school going age, it is necessary to organize the distribution of times of use for each. And it is said that this does not always go well. If we just do a cursory reading of the major Indian newspapers in the recent past we will be brought face to face to heartening scene of parents selling their valuable assets just to buy a simple smart phone or a second-hand computer so their child has uninterrupted access to the education. It is also seen that there have been appeals to the affluent sections of the society to spare their old smartphones, computers and laptops in working condition to the weaker sections of the society so as to the children can at least attend lectures via the online mode.

The initial training imparted to teachers prepared them neither for such a situation, nor for these practices. In schools, only small groups of innovators have so far engaged in the voluntary use of digital tools; probably a little more in vocational institutions.

In the period that has just started, the few groups of innovative teachers will be able to help those who are uncomfortable with digital uses that are a little more sophisticated than the traditional ones: emails, word processing, PowerPoint and Excel. What is to be done in the direction of students or between teaching teams (cooperation becomes a requirement), requires the use of collaborative work tools (Zoom, WhatsApp, Google meet, Microsoft teams etc.), in small groups for teachers or for virtual classes aimed at students. Several types of resources provided by government should play a big role.

4. SUPPORTING STUDENTS

It is interesting to know that teachers who are parents of students discover that they do not know how to organize their children's work at home for a week! So, you can imagine what is going on with the other parents. Students and parents need educational benchmarks, particularly in terms of time and methodology, and they rightly expect them from professionals. Students need personalized feedback, which is what they most miss, real assessments of their learning.

For students, weekly telephone contacts with teachers are very necessary and their frequency will undoubtedly have to be increased notably for the students most in difficulty. Some small groups of students can organize themselves by affinity and sometimes invite teachers to join them: the contemporary video tools they usually use to have fun and chat with each other, like WhatsApp, can facilitate these practices, which will quickly be harmonized. Finally, it should be noted that UNESCO has just launched a “global coalition” to accelerate the implementation of distance education for 850 million students, especially those who, for the moment, do not have access to it.

The pedagogical and educational continuity which existed only a little before the crisis was affirmed by the institution for the period which began; but who can really oversee its effective implementation and especially its quality? Maintaining links is essential and it remains to find an education specific to working at a distance.

The most worrying point concerns the inequalities between students. Already rampantly and conspicuously present in contemporary times in our education system, they will deepen because some families are neither on an economic or above all social and cultural level to help their children and guide them. Without forgetting that often the poorest families no longer believe in the School to ensure the future of their offspring. Last but not least, students with special needs will no longer have the human resources that the inclusive school made available to them in classrooms. They therefore risk being the most penalized. It's a puzzle. How to ensure that no student is left out and avoid putting the most vulnerable at a distance? For different reasons, at least five sectors need to be reinforced: primary education, vocational education, priority education, students from poor families and students with special needs.

After the crisis, few things will return to normal as before, even if some of our contemporaries doubt it, historians, sociologists and philosophers who observe crises and their consequences throughout history say so. And I add that in the future, there will of course be other pandemics; we only know their frequency and severity.

In a few weeks, the school system, somewhat dusted off from some of its old conceptions, will perhaps have sketched new ones, around a new way of living and working together. We must prepare

for changes in our social and educational practices, which are still difficult to imagine; however, there is a pressing urgency. Let us not make the mistake of collective unpredictability again, even if our heavy administrative bureaucracy will do everything to try to restore the "normalcy" appreciated by those who seek the comfort of customs and routines.

Once installed and tested, the working methods for the students over a period of which no one knows the duration, at least two months, the teaching community will have to quickly, and in fact as of now, endeavor to prepare the exit from this crisis because it will be difficult. Hoping that the pandemic does not return immediately, it is not excluded, the great naivety would be to believe that once this phase is completed everything will return to the pre-crisis state. Nothing like this will happen! Admittedly, for the formal school, we suddenly went from everything in the classroom to everything at a distance, without having wanted to, under the sole pressure of events. Patrick Rayou thinks that the current episode "can transform the relationship between school and parents" (it is about time!) and he asked to "think about a more individualized follow-up of the students". But the opposite path to that taken is not possible in the same way, although many students and teachers will no doubt be happy to find themselves in the cocoon of the class. The new path to follow is therefore to be cleared urgently.

5. THE PATH TO A NEW NORMAL WILL NOT BE EASY TO TREAD

From an educational point of view, for many students and parents, the simple return to face-to-face instruction will be experienced as a regression. We already know that the most active students in distance mode are not always the most involved in class situations and vice versa. Yes, they have desires for school, but especially for the social ties it brings to them and the possibility of sometimes leaving the stifling family home, or even getting out of the neighborhood. During this period, students (but not all) will have discovered autonomy and undoubtedly forms of cooperative work among themselves, extending those they had already installed on their own initiative.

Parents, as vacant quasi-teachers, will have assumed unusual, very educational responsibilities, which they will no longer want to deviate from, at least for the most educated of them. Co-education will have to progress. It is true that it starts from very low! The school market will continue its offensive because it will have gained experience, credibility and financial strength. Rémi Boyer already denounces on LinkedIn the overflow of educational offers (but of unequal interest), Microsoft, for its part, has just launched its "innovative teachers' platform"; others will follow suit. The value of formative evaluations will, in certain cases, have been appreciated at their fair value by the students and their parents for whom the notation will then become a lesser obsession, even if forms of distance notation remain. Formal education will remain a resource for a very large number of students, but it will be less central, one resource among others. Everything will depend on each student and especially on each family. Many teachers may want to reinvent their habits when formal uniformity was there. After a very strong individualization of learning, the school model is therefore questioned. The important thing will be not to get caught up in agreed and unproductive debates. Collective action should have priority in terms of educational co-responsibility and school-parent co-management.

The simplest problems can become complicated and cause controversy. For example, the relationship between holidays and school time. There was a well-worked ritual; at the end of the lessons, the parents and the school took the lead in terms of holiday homework, language training, refreshing,

deepening, preparation for back to school, etc. Since the pandemic, parents and the school have had almost everything. Afterwards, how will the different times be marked? Parents may discover that stopping the aid provided by teachers during their vacation does not prevent them from continuing to educate children by mobilizing more of the other resources they already use. It is therefore the meaning of the formal school which is very quickly to reposition and organize differently. Parents will have better grasped some of the difficulties of the teaching profession, the relationships with time will have to be reconstructed and the "educational holidays" will multiply, putting the interest of ordinary school times into perspective.

If a classic analysis by statutes unduly suggests that the population of teachers is homogeneous, it is not and this period will cruelly highlight this, especially if it lasts a little. Those who had lost interest in the possibilities offered by digital tools will have no other option than to hang on to their colleagues already engaged in innovative practices. Collaborative work between teachers (true professional dimension) will become the only display, but each, by exposing to others what they offer to their students will be exposed to the eyes of its peers who can prove to be fierce evaluators. The new situation will therefore not be simple. Let us hope that we go, as Jean-Pierre Véran mentions on his blog, "more towards a strengthened educational alliance than towards an increased privatization" of education. I believe the education system can learn from this disruptive situation and I hope it will. Educational practices in such a situation remain to be invented collectively and it is essential to initiate this movement before the end of the pandemic; it's urgent.

Despite the risk of increasing the diversity of situations, these are hybrid systems around each school and each establishment which are very quickly to design, implement and test, so that education professionals do not do not let the market decide hollow for them, even if it seems that on the planet it is a little the evolution that we note.

6. CONCLUSION

As we have said before, the main educational changes brought about by the integration of the ICTs had as their main source the management of teaching learning. This process was made more complex by the fact that the trainee teachers simultaneously reconstructed the concepts of teaching and ICT in order to possibly combine them. This, thanks to the multiple interactions which took place between the teachers, the actors and the tools which came into play in the various contexts where their learning took place. Therefore, the educational changes were the result of this very complex learning system.

Learning to teach is also a long and complex process which is activated by participating in social activities in various contexts. The complexity of such a process is amplified when the ICTs are integrated into it. Traditionally the basic knowledge of trainee teachers in a foreign language included learning and teaching theories, methodologies and a thorough knowledge of the subject taught. This study suggests that when it comes to integrating ICT into teacher training, we also need to include within basic knowledge, the acquisition of a skill to manage ICT learning and teaching. This skill would include: the ability (1) to adapt to diverse contexts and tools; (2) to manage his time in order to optimize the integration of ICT tools; (3) negotiate with students and colleagues; (4) manage at the same time the integration of ICTs, learning to teach and teaching the language; and finally (5) manage the reconstruction of the concepts of teaching and integration of ICTs.

In conclusion, for the introduction of ICTs in training and learning to have any chance of success, teacher trainees should be supervised on the one hand and strongly encouraged to integrate ICTs on the other hand in their teaching through tasks that would allow them to develop, use and evaluate, in various settings, teaching materials based on ICT. This, in order to allow teachers to reconstruct and link the concepts of ICT integration and teaching.

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