

Chapter 7

The Impacts of the Coronavirus Pandemic (COVID–19) on Language Education

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ABSTRACT

The coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) started to affect the education around the world in the winter of 2020, and each education level such as primary education, secondary education, and higher education had to adapt synchronous or asynchronous online learning emergently. This study will focus on particularly the rapid change in language teaching and learning. How the pandemic had an effect on language learners or teachers and language teaching methods or tools will be discussed in the light of the studies conducted from the beginning of the pandemic until now. Therefore, this study will be a theoretical study which summarizes the results of the studies, and the following questions will be examined in this review of literature: What is online learning? What are the differences between synchronous or asynchronous online learning? What kinds of digital applications, platforms, or teaching tools can be used in online learning?

INTRODUCTION

With the rapid spread of internet use all over the world, there have been major changes in different sectors such as advertising, communication, politics and education. Schools and universities kept pace with this new technological revolution and teachers started to combine classroom activities with online activities in order to facilitate self-directed learning outside the classrooms (Bach, Haynes and Smith, 2007). Therefore, online language learning platforms, digital applications and online teaching and learning tools have been developed, which cater to the needs of students and teachers.

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Online language learning platform is defined as a place “where learners can decide their own learning goals by utilising resources of their own choice, including linguistic and semiotic means of making-meaning, different life and work experience, as well as their personal history” (Ho, 2019, p. 2). It consists of two parts: a virtual learning environment (VLE) and managed learning environment (MLE). The second one is the umbrella term which is “a range of information systems, for example student records, credit accumulation management, information services (such as an online library), finance, and so on” but the former one refers to the place where course materials are shared and interaction takes place between teacher and students or between students. “It provides an opportunity for self-assessment, monitoring of progress, submission and return of assignments” (Bach et al., 2007, p. 35).

These online language platforms were utilized in schools as optional before the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19). Yet, it started to affect the education around the world in the winter of 2020. Therefore, schools in different countries around the world decided to suspend education during COVID-19 in order to stop the spread of contagion. That is why each education level such as primary education, secondary education and higher education had to adapt synchronous or asynchronous online learning emergently. Some institutions preferred synchronous online learning while others taught through asynchronous online learning.

There exist many changes in terms of teaching and learning procedures. For example, Schneider (2020) provides detailed information how the self-access language zone at University of Leeds in the UK is used during the pandemic lockdown. Since the campus is closed, this language learning zone has changed its services. Here are the changes: During the pandemic Microsoft Teams have been used for communication and self-access activities because it has various collaborative tools, discussion sessions, screen-sharing and chat-box features. Apart from, the advantages of this platform, it has some weaknesses such as “preparation of online resources that are fully accessible can be time-intensive, not all live sessions will be suitable for different time zones”. Also, multiple conversations cannot take place on this platform (p. 265). When the online environments used, experiences of students and teachers should be examined as suggested by Skylar (2009) regarding “(a) the performance and satisfaction of students in these newer environments; (b) the level of interactions and strategies used between the students and peers; (c) the variety of activities; (d) qualitative data in the form of interviewing students and instructors and chronicling their experiences over time; and (e) the level of technologies support/ barriers instructors and students encounter” (p. 83).

To sum up, this study will focus on particularly the rapid change in language teaching and learning. How COVID-19 had an effect on language learners or teachers and language teaching methods or tools will be discussed in the light of the studies conducted from the onset of the pandemic until now. Therefore, this study will be a theoretical study which summarizes the results of the studies and the following questions will be examined in this review of literature: What is emergency online learning? What are the differences between synchronous or asynchronous online learning? What causes hybrid learning? What kinds of digital applications, language learning platforms or teaching and learning tools can be used in online learning?

EMERGENCY ONLINE LEARNING

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, all education systems around the world had to use online systems as in language learning emergently. Students and teachers had to transit from their traditional

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