TELC-net – COVID-19 Crisis and teaching in difficult circumstances: discussion 3 – 24 April 2020 - summary

Richard, Prem, Harry, Elsa, Jason, Samaneh, Mizo, Fransisca, Loreta, Marina, Marisol

**Prem** (Nepal): Been trying to connect with university students – difficult. Using Microsoft teams and Zoom for teaching online.

Main challenge: this mode of teaching one-way/not interactive and restrictive i.e. teacher talk/lecture-style. Also Ls expect teacher to talk (3 hrs not easy!) Can’t seem to introduce group work etc. as can with F2F teaching.

Also works with primary teachers: Govt is taking 2 approaches: radio lessons (districts responsible for producing radio lessons – some success; some areas synchronous learning is possible too via internet. But many don’t have internet access at home so difficult for those.

**Elsa** (Ecuador): 3 main challenges.

Works at a state university as a volunteer where Ls are from lowest socioeconomic, underprivileged backgrounds and so connectivity was lost when Ls returned home. Many teachers are mothers with small children at home finding it difficult to give Zoom lessons re: cost, space to work from, daily routine, new mode of working, workload (admin and prep for online classes takes them much longer). Plus their jobs are not guaranteed to continue (contracts may not be renewed end of June) – anxiety over employment is an issue – as university may close down (due to budget cuts) and it’s the only teacher training university! This university was struggling pre-COVID-19 – maybe this is final straw and this could happen elsewhere in poorer parts of the world. Why? It’s not only because of COVID-19, other factors were already at play, but COVID-19 is the perfect excuse. And how can teachers gain solidarity in these trying times when they cannot connect?

**Harry** (University of Leeds / Cameroon):

Elsa’s story resonates with what Harry experiencing. E.g. IATEFL Manchester proposals delayed to Harrogate – but speakers who were sponsored for Manchester have lost the sponsorship so unable to present in Harrogate, e.g. 12 by one organisation. So now need to put out a call for more proposals for Conference 2021.

Workers who were struggling with pay issues pre-pandemic are now being given excuse that this is due to pandemic – pandemic is being used as reason (when it actually isn’t). Great lack of care being evidenced toward workers.

In Cameroon a lot of teacher education is going on. Discussion going on re role of technology in education: it is not technology itself that will teach Ls. Is it a good thing to transfer all teaching to online? Is it a good thing to switch focus to technology? In Sub-Saharan Africa teaching is traditionally teacher-centred/Ls are not independent. The fear is that hype over technology is going to increase – all resources/investment will be now be poured into technology rather than teachers and developing learner motivation/autonomy. This will increase marginalisation of teachers and place less value on them. It will be seen as more than a tool. But teachers in very low-tech resource contexts are teaching well. E.g. one teacher is using WhatsApp broadcast: Ls are not communicating as a group but individually with the teacher/they are unaware of other members also being present (so learner-centred).

Learner-centred and autonomous approach to learning becoming more evident as important in circumstances such as these. And technology cannot make learners autonomous.

**Samaneh** (Uni of Edinburgh / Iran): remote teaching now. Reflects on how been ‘forced’ to adapt very quickly to different remote modes of teaching with insufficient training, especially difficult for teachers of YLs using e.g. WhatsApp. Previously parents needed to be involved due to online safety, security and cyberbullying etc. and YLs were discouraged from using phones in education. Now in many contexts mobile phones are being used and there was no time to prepare YLs re cyber security etc. They are vulnerable.

**RS**: Cyber security is also an issue re Zoom and these discussions!

**Mizo** (Assam, India): Support from All India radio to reach remote students been useful. Parents need a radio or the app on their phones and parents lacked awareness about this – they needed guidance on how to access the programmes/where to find etc. So parents also needed guidance/education to make this mode of learning work.

**Elsa:** also been involved with BBC English programmes. There is a need to revisit and find out what they are doing now as there are excellent resources available via BBC radio or BBC TeachingEnglish. Need to find out what is actually available now via radio to different countries/contexts. Would be worth looking into.

**Jason:** Gave example of teacher in Mumbai who is providing his Ls with a range of online resources (although good access to hardware and software technology there). Maybe invite this teacher to join the next discussion?

Chatbox: (Jason) Manjusha, who's in charge of the tech side of things at AINET, not Nadeem, his colleague from Mumbai? (Manjusha) Jason sir, I'll post the name on our whatsapp group. I think it's Deepak. (Jason) It was Satish Thakare. I'll drop him a message.

**Francisca** (Chile): Works with VYLs in private school. Each family one computer but parents work so children have to access themselves. Uses easy-to-use videos but difficult to get feedback on level of learning of children. Parent feedback has been positive but hard to assess learning.

**Marina** (Argentina): Asks YLs for feedback via WhatsApp. Feels emotional connection is also very important. Finds out how they did the activities, difficulties they had, what they enjoyed or not, what they would like to do etc. Gets audio feedback via WhatsApp. Prioritises rapport and connection with learners. (RS uses, e.g. Flip grid with a task with his son.)

**Loreto** (University of Leeds / Chile): In Chile where no-tech, teachers prepare handouts which parents collect and the marking will be huge with large classes (45 Ls)! In Leeds research planned to find out how teachers have been adapting in China.

**Prem**: Difficulties for Uni students to do dissertations – can’t collect data or observe classes

**Marisol** (Mexico): PhD student and has 2 sons so appreciates the importance of autonomy. Important to personalise the use of technology. Need to look at attitudes to learning and teaching.

**RS**: How can learning continue without education? Interesting to look at this.

**Harry**: Ts being encouraged to use radio and TV lessons more and more, but the room looks like an elite classroom and Ls are adults. E.g. TV maths lesson – used cost of a drone to teach maths, but L asked what a drone was! T made to look ridiculous (inappropriate to context but also creates poor image of a teacher and is devaluing!)

**Elsa**: e.g. OU and Dogme (low-resource) – so now that Ls are spending more time with families at home, why not encourage projects to explore own languages, family histories/trees, own culture, etc. i.e. draw on resources that are there!

**Prem**: But radio or TV programmes are in Ls’ 2nd, 3rd, or 4th language – not their L1 so they need support. Language matters in terms of rapport, emotional contact …

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| Chatbox**Jason**: A blog post on WA broadcast: <https://blog.interactiveschools.com/blog/whatsapp-broadcast-what-do-you-need-to-know>**Manjusha**: Use of AIR is interesting. Thank you for organising this session. |