TELC-net COVID-19 Crisis and teaching in difficult circumstances: discussion 4 – 01 May 2020

Speakers: Richard, Prem, Elsa, Harry, Loreta, Jason, Satish, Laurent, Manjusha, Hind, XY Zhang?, Hongyi, Samaneh, Renu

**Prem** (Nepal): The number of people requesting to join the FB group is increasing – now more than 3,600.

**Richard**: Reminder of who we are (TELC-net) and link to website <http://bit.ly/telcnet-home> and FB group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/telcgroup/>

**General observation**: feels less productive working at home; everything takes longer; unaware of what day it is, etc.

**Richard**: Brief summary of issues that came out of discussion 3 (doc available on website).

**Satish** (India):Trying out a way of teaching and assessing vocab learning. Creates videos (to teach vocab – sends link via WhatsApp) then creates tests using a free website (testmoz) which can be used to assess learning. Results are immediate so can then phone the learner and give some feedback/instruction. Some challenges: creating the scripts, motivating them to watch the videos, internet connection, etc. Started with own school (working as a team) but now sharing this with other teachers in other schools. Also getting feedback from students on how this is working. Will share an example video with the group.

**Manjusha** (India): Unclear audio so wrote in chatbox [We are using testmoz for creating objective type tests, we post it on our WhatsApp group. Students solve it in allotted time. They get instant results so this is useful for assessment.]

**Laurent** (Rwanda): Since yesterday, all schools closed until September. MoE has organised radio/TV lessons but not well organised – more like ‘keeping students busy’. Also public examinations won’t take place. At private college where he works, creating online lessons which Ls can download. Some funding from the college available to Ts for internet connection. But this is an exception – many institutions will wait until September when schools reopen.

**Jason**: In India, internet is comparatively cheap (although mostly pay-as-you-go so have to top up). In Rwanda, or Malawi, for example, it's extremely expensive and incredibly slow! In fact, generally across Africa.

[Manjusha: Now, we have challenges regarding connectivity, audio problem while using zoom sessions.]

**Harry**: In Cameroon internet is expensive too. Joined a Zoom webinar scheduled for 40 mins – in reality took much, much longer due to connectivity. Presenter (in Guinea) was unable to get message across. WhatsApp much better re connectivity and can record a video and share (when network less busy at night) – would work better.

**Jason:** In West Bengal MoE has advised not to use Zoom due to safety/privacy issues. Instead use Cisco WebEx.

**Richard:** From these discussions seems that many Ts have been instructed or had the idea to use Zoom, e.g. to recreate the classroom, but seems this is not successful/realistic, and that other methods/modes, e.g. Satish’s example are working better because content is shared and downloaded and Ls can work in their own time.

**Hind:** Have moved to online teaching for first time in Saudi but some can’t afford internet and some Ls don’t have laptops so are unable to upload assignments. In some other countries in Middle East, Ls are provided with internet and laptops, but had no time to organise this in Saudi. Some Ls were unable to do exams online so had to organise other times and methods, e.g. via WhatsApp. (Use Zoom, WhatsApp and Edmodo too).

**XY Zhang?** (China): Most Ls now have normal classes but when they had online classes, there were issues. More than 40 Ls in a class so difficult for Ts to know who attended or paid attention. Also unfamiliar with the apps so Ts had to also record the lesson again after doing the ‘live’ lesson and so this added to their workload.

**Harry:** Wechat has got some fantastic features for interaction and very popular in China?

**XY Zhang?** (China): Yes, Wechat is very popular and effective. Teachers use it to communicate with primary Ls’ parents to discuss their children’s learning. Doesn’t think Wechat has the potential to be used for teaching but can be used to share teaching materials.

**Hongyi** (China): Has experienced Wechat as a student and teacher but only for use after class to recycle or for reading practice, e.g. Ls read aloud and parents send the recordings to teachers for feedback. During the COVID-19 crisis Ts used various other apps for online teaching, e.g. Ding Ting?, Ding Talk (similar to Zoom).

Wechat and WhatsApp are very similar but Wechat has more functionality?

**Jason**: For some people there are issues of monitoring with WeChat, but both Zoom and WeChat can be used to communicate between UK and China (both available in both locations).

[Samaneh: We have been asked to use Collaborate Ultra instead of Zoom. It is apparently part of Blackboard platform.]

**Hind:** Class Dojo - a very interesting app. It’s mainly used to follow up with students and parents but it has other great features too. Can create a class online and add pics of the Ls (cartoon characters), add tasks T wants to focus on e.g. Edmodo and WhatsApp assignments, attendance and punctuality. Ls are awarded points when they complete a task and this was highly motivating for Ls even though they knew it wouldn’t contribute to evaluation (only class work). Ls were so motivated to get the points that they asked for extra work if they didn’t achieve, so they could earn the maximum.

**Sagun** (Ireland/Nepal): Dealing with requests from Nepal to deliver awareness-raising sessions to Ts there on digital competencies and available web tools. However, danger of dependence on tool and reduced focus on pedagogy. [Jason: A critical appropriation of the technology itself. Sagun: Agree. After communicating with one of the teachers in Nepal I found that their institution also conducted some basic survey to understand their own situation related to use of digital technologies before deciding the tools for synchronous communication with learners.]

Referred to session organised by Scholars Association of Nepal – there was a discussion re modes to adopt to ensure equity and access/also reach Ls who can’t join online. Rep from MoE also present. 4 modalities: use of letters, radio, TV, online. So thinking now re blending modalities rather than focusing only on online mode. Has spoken with Ts in Nepal, and one e.g. using e-school LMS very effectively, others had tried Zoom with primary and junior Ls but not so effectively – it’s a process of trial and error re modes of learning at the moment. Feels it’s a good time to become aware of possibilities and modalities but need to keep pedagogy at heart of this and see technology for what it is – a tool.

**Richard**: Good thing that Ts/all of us becoming more aware of technological tools, apps etc. and becoming more knowledgeable about these, but also of the limitations of technology and will be in a better critical position to argue against the use of technology for its own sake over and above pedagogy, and that technology is not a cure-all.

**Prem**: Schools are trying out many tools – many synchronous e.g. Zoom. Gave example re parents: his friend’s daughter in Grade 4 and receiving classes via Zoom. Parent helps to log in and attends class with her. But children making a lot of noise and T had to remind children time and again to stop making so much noise ‘the principal is watching’, etc. (Ls had not seen each other in a long time and were so excited to see each other! ☺) In fact, neither the T, the Ls nor the parents really had a clue as to how this ‘classroom’ should work. Reflecting on this, these tools are requiring us to restructure the space – home space as a school or classroom space, which is very difficult.

**Harry**: A lot of talk about the ‘new normal’ and agrees that it’s true and many of the things happening now will continue and be normal. Re relationship between T and Ls: if we look at different circles within an educational system – so the Ls themselves forming the inner core circle (their own community/sharing that the T is unaware of), then the next intermediate circle which includes the T, where T acts as a kind of coach, then the bigger one – the school culture. Referring to Prem’s ‘story’, it seems that the principal is somehow excluded from the intimacy between T and Ls (‘Be quiet the principal is listening’). Going back to this ‘intimacy’ or rapport – this is a good thing and if that kind of team relationship between T and Ls can be developed, something good can be done there.

Another point is that of technology – instead of this focus on sophisticated tech CALL etc. ordinary Ts are now using readily available technology, apps – more simple tech than is found in the literature. So, getting to the point where there will be a ‘critical appropriation’ of technology in terms of what Ts are using/finding useful from the T’s point of view. They will have the voice on technology for teaching (In our time of need your complex technologies couldn’t help us because they were inappropriate in our context). Ts will not be dictated to/will be able to critically evaluate.

**Hind**: re intimacy between T and Ls – Hind introduced hand signals to manage the online class/avoid interruptions, e.g. 1 finger = bathroom; 2 fingers = a question, etc. While principal was watching and one L left for the bathroom, she challenged the L and Hind – all Ls laughed and Hind had to explain (e.g. of special intimacy between T and Ls).

**Elsa**: Re teamwork in Ecuador – talked about some international competitive gaming vocabulary tournament which 5 Ts and 3Ss taking part in and scoring highly on. The Ss are gaining more points than the Ts (it’s scored according to level). Now they are in the top 20 and the 1st prize winners will get free licences to use this program for 12 months. It looks like these 8 may win 2,500 licences for their University ss!

**Renu:** will talk about digital parenting next week. But 8-14 year-olds with no previous experience are now working with Zoom, Google forms, and there is no data protection/security so parents really need to know how to monitor online activity of their children and keep them safe. Ts need to work on digital parenting with parents. (See Chatbox below).

*Action*: Think about how the discussions should continue. Discuss ideas on FB page. Look at recording and discuss what to include in next discussion. Maybe invite someone external to group to join and share ideas as did Satish.

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| Chatbox  **Renu**: In india we have to develop a mindset for online teaching. Digital parenting is what is required in the beginning.  **Jason**: Yes, this issue of parental involvement 'buy in' is so important, Renu. Dipika was also mentioning it a week or two ago.  **Renu**: There are challenges, yet teachers are working at their end exploring technology via Webinars to learn unlearn and relearn.  My concern right now is teacher's wellbeing. They are bombarded right now.  **Sagun**: Interesting point Renu about digital parenting. I would like to know more about it.  **Jason**: Perhaps you can share about this next week, Renu?  **Richard**: Hi Renu please tell us a bit more next week.  **Marisol**: Hi everyone! Once we have the channel of communication with the learners, maybe we should reflect on the effectiveness of the sort of activities we consider suitable for the students, especially for their learning process, don’t we?  **Harry:** Marisol that's an excellent point!  **Jason**: and that's where the feedback issue is critical. What kinds of formative assessment can be conducted with digital learning? Some of Satish's strategies for getting instant feedback were examples of this, I think. |