

**Effect of Covid-19 Lockdown on the Learning and Teaching of Languages:
An Analysis**

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Abstract

The Covid- 19 lockdown affected almost all the sectors of education and one of the worst sections was the teaching and learning of languages. Language is the most beautiful capacity bestowed by God to humans and it is the quest of every individual to learn more and more languages in order to communicate and understand the different people and different cultures of world. Language learning happens in the natural environment and when a child is given the opportunity to communicate in the natural environment, he/she is able to learn that language with full proficiency. This was not possible in the online mode of learning and teaching and the result was that students faced a lot of problems in the learning of different languages. Although there are many online Apps and tools which help the students to learn the different languages of the world but still there are many problems and challenges which the teachers and students face during the teaching and learning of languages. The present paper is intended to analyse all the issues in the learning and teaching of languages and how the Covid-19 lockdown affected the learning and teaching of languages.

Keywords: Covid-19 Lockdown, Languages, Teaching, Learning, Effects

Introduction

Covid-19 halted the function of all the institutions and organisations of the world and teaching and learning domain was not an exception to it. All the educational institutions were immediately closed after the spread of Covid- 19 in order to stop this deadly pandemic. There was not so much time available to countries to go through the planned way because it took very less time for the spread of this virus and within no time corona-lockdown was declared in all the countries.

Education of children is must and in the absence of good education a society can't achieve new heights and produce civilised citizens. It was a challenge especially for the underdeveloped countries to find an alternative approach to teach students from their homes without coming to school.

Many softwares and hardware companies of international, national, and local importance came for the rescue of educational institutions and offered their services and different platforms in order to continue the teaching and learning process virtually without attending the schools in physical mode.

Teaching and learning of languages were also a big concern for the teachers and learners because the teaching and learning of languages is not about the theory but it is the practical domain. Language learning happens in the natural environment because presently the most effective method of teaching the languages is the communicative method and the pre-requisite of this method is to provide the students more and more natural situations and opportunities to use the target language so, that communicative abilities may be developed among them. But if we see these opportunities were not possible during the virtual mode of teaching and learning the languages.

Although there are many language learning apps available in the world but there are many issues as well for the students and teachers to use these apps like the fee to access these language learning apps and the availability of the smart phones and good internet connectivity etc. we can't deny the importance of virtual mode of teaching and learning during the Covid-19 lockdown because this was the only option before the educational institutions of the world in order to continue the teaching learning process. There are many issues which the teachers and students faced in the virtual mode of teaching and there is the immediate need to address all those issues and concerns so, that in the future teaching and learning process in general and languages in particular may get minimal distraction in online mode of teaching and learning. The present paper tries to find out the answers to all these questions and tries to find out the solutions as well, so that the teaching and learning of languages may not get affected by using the online resources in future.

Technological Issues for Teachers/ Learners

One of the biggest issues for most of the teachers and students in the online mode of teaching was handling the different online softwares and hardware's. The frequently used online platforms and apps during the covid-19 were the google classrooms, zoom classes, WhatsApp, Emails, YouTube, recorded, voice notes etc. (Sodhar & Benazirabad, 2020)

During the first phase of the online classes, it was totally a new concept for the teachers especially for those teachers who were not much aware about the different online classrooms available. Zoom classes, google classrooms were totally new concepts for the teachers and then to handle these abruptly without any guidance and proper planning was a

big concern for the teachers as well the students. It took a considerable amount of time for the students and teachers to learn how to handle these different online classes like to create classrooms, sending the joining link, joining the class, entering the participants in the classroom and then to handle the class via online mode.

Language class if we see it has the focus on all the four skills of language learning and teaching but due to the online mode it was not possible for the teachers to address all these domains. In language learning every student needs to participate actively in the class be it the group discussion, debate, presentation, developing the writing skill, understanding the language, and reading the target language.

The other issues faced by the teachers and students were the issues of connectivity because most of the teachers belong to the far-flung areas and the issue of connectivity for such teachers and students becomes issue for them to take part in the teaching and learning of language smoothly.

Evaluation of the students usually becomes problematic because students cheat in the online exams and copy the answers from the books and internet. “teachers face serious challenges in assessing students online which are related to lack of physical interaction, assessment of speaking and translation courses, high risk of cheating and plagiarism, technical difficulties, and assessing a large number of students” (Abduh, 2021). One of big issues during the initial period of the online classes was the security issue it was very hectic to convince some students and teachers to open the account in the different online platforms available in order to take part in the teaching learning process.

Socio-psychological Issues for Teachers/ Learners

Sound socio-psychological conditions are very important for both the teachers and students in the language learning classroom then only they can concentrate on the target language and participate actively in the practice sessions in order to develop the language skills. Due to covid-19 the anxiety levels of both the students and teachers increased because of the fear to come in contact with the virus and which obviously affected the language learning process among the students.

Stephen Krashen an expert in the field of linguistics and language learning also claims in his theory of second language acquisition that affective filter plays an important role in the acquisition of second language. The affective variables according to Stephen Krashen are the motivation, self-confidence, anxiety, low self-esteem affect the second language.

During the covid-19 lockdown the stress levels of the students and teachers increased and they gave less preference to the teaching and learning due to new stressors and it was also seen that in the virtual classrooms there was less development for the speaking skill as compared to the writing skill (Hartshorn & Mcmurry, 2020). Some of the other issues for the

students were the non-availability of the smart phones to attend the language classes due to the low financial conditions and the low level of income due to the lockdown. The other socio-psychological issues during the online teaching are the smart phones in the hands of children. Many students don't use their smartphones in the right direction and the result is that they are not able to perform well. Today boys and girls can be seen holding their mobile phones whole day using the different social networking sites and this way waste their precious time.

Increased Use of Online Language Courses and Apps

There are many online language learning apps which are available in the market and due to covid-19 the demand for their apps increased because many people started to think to learn new languages due to the availability of time due to covid-19. According to the 2020 report of Duolingo (an American language learning app and worlds most downloaded language app for learning 35 languages) they received 30 million new registrations from 11th march to 30th April 2020 which shows very clearly the new trend to use the technology in order to learn the languages in addition that many other apps also claimed the high response of people towards learning the languages virtually through the apps like Busuu also claimed that its revenue was increased three times in China and Italy during the covid-19 (Qi, 2021).

The increasing trend towards the different language learning apps during the covid-19 depicts how the covid-19 has affected the learning and teaching of languages due to covid-19 lockdown. There are many online language learning courses available and people tend to have developed more interest in these courses because of availability of time and quest for learning the other languages.

Effects on the Vernacular Languages

Due to Covid-19 lockdown the effect on the learning of new languages was clear because the high response of the online learning and teaching websites and apps. We can not deny the effect of lockdown on the vernacular languages and local cultures of the world. Because people who used to live in big cities and towns for business, education, jobs etc. usually forget their local languages and give preferences to other languages and adopt the culture of the people they are residing with. But due to the covid-19 lockdown people came back to their ancestral residences and due to which they and their kids came again in contact with their local languages and culture and this way they developed again the taste and affinity with their local languages and culture.

International and many national organisations are giving much importance on the preservation and protection of the world's diverse cultures and languages because these languages and cultures are defining the identities of the people who speak these languages. So, we can say covid-19 lockdown has a positive effect on the vernacular languages and cultures of the world.

On the other hand the work on indigenous languages like documentation and the revival work faced lot of problems during the covid-19 because it needs field work which was not possible during the covid-19 and we need to find the alternative ways to work on the documentation and the rival of these languages because our future is bound to our languages(McIvor et al., 2020). Local or native languages should be encouraged to learn so that the people will get benefit from their native language and their linguistic identity will be preserved. In Malaysia and some other countries children are encouraged to learn their mother tongue or local language and they get more employment opportunities because it is believed that these people will be able to communicate with not only the foreigners but very nicely with the local people in their local languages (Ationg et al., 2021).

New Entries and Processes in the Languages

Due to Covid-19 lockdown coinage of new words in the languages especially in the English language like the words Covid-19 is totally a new term which was included only after the virus was found. Some other word formation process related to covid-19 like Backformation, affixation like maskless, compounding like Coronaviva, blending like Coronocation, etc. were seen in the English language due to covid-19 lockdown (Al-salman & Haider, 2021). The new words in particular language means the students and teachers will learn the new vocabulary items and their meanings as well.

Conclusion

Language is the most beautiful capacity of humans bestowed by God, which sets them apart from other creatures of the world. There are more than 7000 languages in the world spoken by different people in their particular communities and some languages like English are spoken all over the world. Learning more and more languages is the quest of every human being because it enables one to communicate with that particular language community but if we see due to Covid-19 the field of language teaching and learning suffered many problems because all the educational institutions were closed for onsite teaching learning process and same was for teaching and learning of languages.

During the virtual mode of teaching there were many problems which the teachers and students faced like handling the different technological tools for teaching and attending the online classes, connectivity issues in far-flung areas, non-availability of the smart phones to the all the students, issues for teachers to assess the language learning in the students. Anxiety, stress levels, low motivation towards learning and teaching were the other problems faced by the students during the covid-19 lockdown.

There was considerable surge on learning the new languages through different language learning softwares and apps like Duolingo, etc., and due to lockdown, the affinity towards the local languages and cultures increased but the documentation and revival work for the indigenous languages and cultures was badly affected but it was not possible without the field work.

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