



## ENHANCED USE OF ICT DURING AND POST PANDEMIC IN FOREIGN- LANGUAGE CLASSROOMS

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### Abstract:

The pandemic of Covid-19 brought about a paradigm shift in teaching-learning processes. Pedagogical practices were largely dependent on ICT-tools. In the Indian context, where studies have shown the retarded transition of education towards the use of ICT, how did the Indian teachers adapt to the new modalities of teaching? This article studies the impact of the pandemic on the integration of ICT-tools in French language classrooms. Interviews with French teachers reveal a broadening of teachers' perspective, leading to the enhanced use of ICT in the language classrooms, not only during but also after the pandemic.

**Key words:** ICT, Foreign-language Learning, Pandemic, Online-Learning, FFL.

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### Introduction:

Educational modalities were subject to physical and social restrictions due to the pandemic of Covid-19. Educational institutes had to fall back on virtual modes of teaching and learning. Students and teachers alike were confronted with unheard of learning-teaching processes. In the case of language classrooms, where interaction forms the basis of all learning, the virtual and online modalities of teaching had to be conducive to these specificities of foreign-language learning. In this virtual setting, in what way did information and communication technology (ICT) support the educational processes? In French-language classrooms, how did the teachers use ICT for language-acquisition? What changes did the teachers bring about in their teaching strategies? In the post-pandemic phase, did the teaching practices revert to their original techniques?

In order to answer these questions, we conducted an in-depth study of classroom experiences of French-language teachers. The objective of this research is to define the scope of ICT in the pedagogical practices of French-language teachers, during and after the pandemic. In this article, we review the literature pertaining to the scope of ICT in education and identify the particular challenges of the Indian context. The research methodology is then presented concisely, to be followed by the results and the analysis of the results. The results are discussed in order to highlight the long-term impacts of the pandemic on the use of ICT in French-language classrooms.

### Review of Literature:

Information and communication technology (ICT) has become an integral part of human life today. Lebrun-Brossard (2021) describes ICT and digital mediums as a social, cultural and semiotic phenomenon to which humans are gradually adapting. ICT has thus become an inherent component of human life and social relations. Meunier (2017), on the other hand, highlights languages as semiotic tools rooted in human relations. It is thus



imperative to acknowledge the impact of ICT on languages. Lacelle et al. (2017) opine that though we are an early stage of ICT integration in human life, it has an impact on the way humans manipulate language to deal with social relations.

ICT has an overarching impact on all aspects of human life, not only interpersonal relations and language but also the domain of education and learning. Taking into account the variable relationship between languages and ICT, the impact of ICT on language-learning is also undeniable. Speaking about the communicative approach of foreign-language teaching, Troncy et al (2021) emphasise on ICT as predominantly effective tools for language learning. The advantages of the integration of ICT in language-learning have been proven (Cakici, 2016; Jayanthi and Kumar, 2016). Certain studies show the particular usefulness of specific ICT tools and how they allow for creativity and improvisation by the students; such as Kahoot (Hong, 2020) and blogs and emails (Rodriguez & Parra, 2005).

With respect to the Indian context, the National Education Policy (NEP) of 2020 highlights the importance of ICT and insists on its integration in Indian classrooms. “Extensive use of technology will be made for teaching and learning of different languages and to popularize language learning” (NEP, 2020, p. 13). Singh (2019) highlights the potential of Indian classrooms to integrate ICT as a tool for education, while also citing certain challenges with respect to the same. For Singh, the negative attitude towards ICT as well as lack of training in technological innovations for the teachers is the major challenge to be tackled. Salehi & Salehi (2012) point out that Indian teachers lack the skills to organise ICT resources and process them for use in classrooms. The integration of ICT in Indian classrooms is thus retarded by concerns specific to teachers (Oradini & Saunders, 2008; Goswami 2014).

At this juncture, we question the teaching processes used by the teachers during the pandemic. Worldwide, educational institutes shifted to online modalities and ensured the continuity of learning. In this scenario, how did Indian teachers, straddled with technological challenges, attune to the new learning environment? In what way did they adapt to the use of ICT tools for teaching? In French language classrooms, what was the impact of the online environment on the pedagogical practices of teachers? Through this research, we aim to study the manner in which Indian teachers reconciled their teaching strategies with ICT tools.

### **Methodology:**

This study dwells on the use of ICT in French language classrooms in India. The focal point of this study is the enhanced integration of ICT in classroom activities, with respect to the shift in classroom modalities due to the pandemic. In order to study this transition, we focused our attention on Indian schools, and interacted with the school teachers to gain insights about their teaching methodologies. We conducted interviews with thirty teachers of the French language, in the state of Maharashtra. These teachers were teaching in schools affiliated to varied boards of education- SSC, CBSE and ICSE, as well as the IGCSE, prevalent predominantly in Mumbai. The teachers were asked questions pertaining to three broad themes— the consequences and problems of online learning, the adaptation of teaching methods to the online modality, with the integration of ICT and the post-pandemic phase of learning. The questionnaire comprised of the following questions:



- According to your experience, did online classes have a positive or negative impact on student participation and motivation?
- What kind of problems did you face?
- In what way did you adapt your teaching techniques to the online mode?
- Which new tools did you exploit in your French language classroom?
- How have the students adapted to the classroom after the pandemic?
- What changes did you notice in the classroom in the post-pandemic phase?

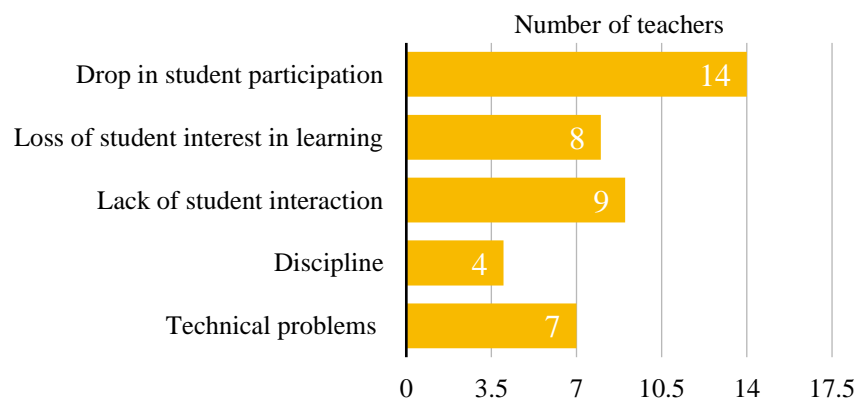
Given that the teachers were experts of the French language, the interviews were conducted in French. The questions (as presented supra) as well as the responses of the teachers (presented further-on in the study) have been presented as appropriate English translations. The interviews were conducted on the Zoom platform. They were recorded and then transcribed. The open-ended questions allowed the teachers to respond descriptively and openly about their experiences. Thus, the responses of the teachers form the corpus of this study. In the next section, we will represent the classified data of the corpus, to be analysed and discussed in the later sections.

**Results:**

In this section the data has been regrouped under three broad themes, as elaborated in the previous section, and has been presented in the form of figures and tables.

At the outset, we studied the teacher interviews in order to identify the problem areas with respect to the online modality of language learning. The teachers were asked to point out the difficulties faced by them in the teaching-learning process during the pandemic. Figure 1 represents the problems that ensued and the number of teachers who claimed to have faced these problems in their respective classrooms.

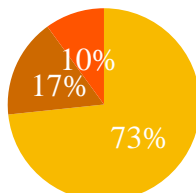
Figure 1 : Problems faced by the teachers



The teachers were then asked about the modifications brought about by them in the teaching techniques and practices, in order to effectively teach online and overcome these problems. Amongst the thirty teachers interviewed, majority of the teachers claimed to have largely modified their teaching (Figure 2).



Figure 2 : Modifications in teaching techniques



■ Largely modified techniques ■ Moderately modified techniques

The teachers opinions, as presented below, are indicative of the efforts put in by the teachers to make learning more cohesive for the students.

*“Yes, we had to change our strategy a lot.”*

*“We as teachers learnt a lot, new techniques, new online games, making videos.”*

*Earlier we used to use the chalk and the board but then with changing times we started making PPTs which helped the students.”*

The teachers were then asked to elaborate on the new tools that they used in their online classrooms. Evidently, the tools mentioned by them were ICT tools, used for three purposes. Firstly, the teachers mentioned the use of online platforms and learning management systems (LMS) which posed as the classroom environment and facilitated coordination. Secondly, teachers mentioned softwares and programmes that allowed them to create content and reference material for learning. Lastly, teachers mentioned online resources which allowed them to complement their teaching through activities. Amongst such tools mentioned, we noticed an emphasis on game-based tools. The following table presents all the new tools exploited and integrated by the teachers in their online classrooms.

**Table 1 : Tools used by teachers**

<b>Online platforms and LMS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Microsoft Teams</li> <li>- Google Classroom</li> <li>- Google Meet</li> <li>- Zoom</li> <li>- Webex</li> </ul>
<b>Programmes for content creation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- PowerPoint (PPT)</li> <li>- YouTube</li> <li>- Video Recorders</li> <li>- Inshot</li> </ul>
<b>Tools for classroom activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Google forms</li> <li>- Quizzes on Google forms</li> <li>- Story Board</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Jumper</li><li>- Kahoot</li></ul>
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The teachers spoke of the positive effects of the use of these tools in online classroom.

*“They have loved it. We have played quizzes.”*

*“Short clips. They have loved it. They have absolutely loved it.”*

*“I said we will watch a French video. Everybody was super motivated.”*

The teachers were then questioned about the post-pandemic phase, where the students returned to offline classrooms. The teacher-opinions reflect the renewed enthusiasm of the students and their increased interest in learning. However, in spite of this, the teachers mentioned that they continued to use the ICT tools in the classrooms.

*“There are the things I started using online and even after pandemic I am continuing it, so it’s actually beneficial.”*

*“So even now, we are continuing to use Google classroom. We are still sharing material through PPTs.”*

*“Yes, we still do Kahoot and Padlet in class. It’s fun for the students.”*

These results give us an overview of the problems faced by the teachers during the pandemic, their adaptation strategies, the tools exploited by them and the continued use of these tools in the post-pandemic phase. In the next section, we have analysed this data in detail and discussed the transition in the use of ICT in the French-language classrooms.

### **Analysis and Discussion:**

The results presented in the previous section shed light on the various ICT tools integrated in the French language classrooms. In this section we have studied the integration of these tools from the point of view of two timelines- the first, during the pandemic and the second, in the post-pandemic phase. The study of this transition is, in principle, an attempt to define the change in teachers’ orientation with respect to the use of ICT.

In the first timeline, initially, the teachers had to adapt to the online learning environment, with platforms like Zoom and Google Meet. Though this ensured that learning was not hampered due to the sanitary situation, teachers faced the lack of participation of students.

*“When we tried to interact with the students, there was no reply at all. The participation was completely zero.”*

In order to overcome these problems, majority of the teachers had to rethink their teaching strategies. The teachers thus explored different modes of content-creation and activity-based tools for enriching the learning experience. The teachers opined that the students enjoyed these type of activities. This goes to show that, the online modality of learning was not, in itself, sufficient to ensure continuity of learning. The teachers had to resort to ICT tools to encourage the students and involve them in the work. Thus, during the pandemic, teachers upgraded their skills and learned the use and integration of ICT tools in the classroom, which showed favourable results with respect to student motivation and involvement.

In the second timeline, i.e. the post-pandemic phase, the teachers noticed the enthusiasm of the students and their motivation in learning, due to the opening-up of schools.



*“I saw a very different behaviour of the students after the pandemic. They had not really studied in the two years of online classes. But they were happy to be back at school, meeting their friends, they were participating in class and taking efforts. So that was good.”*

Thus, the teachers need not have resorted to ICT tools for their teaching and could have resumed their previous techniques of content-delivery and teaching. However, with the experience of the pandemic, the teachers recognised the potential of the ICT tools and continued to use them even in the offline and regular modalities of the classroom.

We thus notice a paradigm shift in the teachers' perspective with respect to the ICT tools. Firstly, the pandemic led the teachers to adapt to an online teaching environment. Secondly, they had to develop technical skills and remodel their teaching techniques, for creating a conducive learning process. During the pandemic, the teachers continued to gain insights on the effective use of ICT in French language classrooms. They thus continued to integrate the various ICT tools in their regular classes as well. This has opened up new realms of pedagogical innovations for the teachers. We may thus deduce that, ICT, which imposed itself as the solitary tool for learning during the pandemic, became a part of the preferred techniques of language teaching in the post-pandemic phase.

#### **Conclusion:**

The objective of this research was to study the impact of the pandemic on the use of ICT in French language classrooms. The results have brought out the enhanced use of ICT tools by the language teachers. Thus, the pandemic gave way for exploring new teaching techniques, and in fact, gave impetus to the use of ICT and to innovation in language classrooms. The teachers, initially forced to modify their teaching techniques, gradually adapted to the new teaching environment and implemented ICT-based pedagogical practices, which have continued to be a part of the language classrooms even in the post-pandemic phase. In this way, the trying period of the pandemic paved the way for technologically-skilled teachers, and thus an evolved pedagogy. We can therefore conclude that the pandemic has proven to be the driving force of enhanced ICT-integration in language classrooms. Now that the language teachers are accustomed to and well aware of the prospects of an ICT-based pedagogy, it has multiplied the avenues for further research. We wish to broaden our perspective in the coming years and explore the scope of an ICT-based pedagogy across spectrums of foreign-language learning.

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