Digital Pedagogy Before, During, and After COVID-19:
Reflections of an Indian EFL Teacher

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to the adoption of synchronous online learning in Indian schools, prompting questions about the sustainability of these changes and whether digital pedagogy has returned to pre-Covid levels. A case study examined an EFL teacher's principles and practices in a rural elementary school, using Farrell's reflective practice framework to understand perceived changes influencing his thoughts, practices, and outlooks. The study reveals that the sudden adoption of digital teaching in schools had no long-term impact. Teachers received a preliminary induction, but there has not yet been any enduring transformation. As a result, following the pandemic, schools have reverted to their previous face-to-face format, abandoning the online learning impulse and environment. It has been discovered that the purported commitments to strengthen the school system's adaptability and resilience to handle any such future tragedies are ineffectual. The return of the previous resistance to digital pedagogy in school had been detrimental to the country's digital learning flight.

KEYWORDS

Covid-19, Digital Pedagogy, EFL, India, Reflections, School Teachers

INTRODUCTION

With the end of the COVID-19 threats, people may finally move past their severe existential dilemma. However, it has permanently altered every facet of human cognition and behaviour. The creation of a flexible framework to handle any such pandemic crises in the future is the main goal of the majority of retrospective evaluations and studies on its effects.

The pandemic disruption in the education system was huge across globe. It has led to closures of schools, training institutes, and higher education facilities worldwide, causing a paradigm shift in education delivery through online platforms (Muthuprasad et al., 2021; Zhao & Watterston, 2021). According to UNESCO, by the end of April 2020, 186 countries have implemented nationwide closures, affecting about 73.8% of the total enrolled learners (UNESCO, 2020a). This shift presents

challenges for both teachers and students, as they must adapt to a new system, referred to as "Education in Emergency" (Howard et al., 2021, p.3).

The pandemic had forced teachers and students to quickly adapt to virtual education, resulting in emergency of remote teaching. Instruction has shifted online, then back to the physical classroom, or a combination of remote delivery and face-to-face, known as the HyFlex model (Beatty, 2019). Teachers had to adapt to this specific learning environment to create feasible and effective learning experiences (Lockee, 2021). Teachers and students experienced psychosocial effects such as self-discipline, loneliness, depression, and desperation due to lockdown, quarantine, or family member loss (Sang et al., 2021; Dayal & Pratibha, 2023).

The pandemic prompted parents and caregivers to become home-learning helpers, utilizing technology for daily learning, teaching, and assessment, despite initial confusion and anxiety (Dos Santos, 2022). Online digital interfaces were used for learning, teaching, and assessment (Bashir et al., 2021). Teachers from technologically less advanced countries faced challenges in providing necessary devices and internet access (Kundu & Bej, 2021a). Despite these challenges, they showed support and moral values by helping each other in difficult situations (Detyna et al., 2023).

Education systems globally prioritize delivering educational standards, creating a conducive environment for student well-being, nurturing social and interpersonal skills, and teaching moral values and daily routines (Farrell & Stanclik, 2023). These are the vulnerable areas that suffered greatly during the epidemic, and as research has shown, "Schools must reopen in order to continue providing guidance and support to students" (UNESCO, 2020b, p.7).

The reopening of schools has alleviated exhaustive online classes, but students and teachers are not happy yet since they have developed a habit to work online (Mahyoob, 2020; Mayrink, Albuquerque-Costa, & Ferraz, 2021; Kundu at al., 2022). The pandemic has blurred traditional and distance education lines, leading to a shift towards multi-mode delivery systems allowing for seamless transition across different systems (Radic et al., 2021).

During the pandemic, EFL teaching-learning has been significantly influenced by technology, with teachers adopting online applications to improve language proficiency (Khatoony & Nezhadmehr, 2020; Cutri et al., 2020; Kundu & Betal, 2022). Despite technical issues, most studies praised the positive impact of online learning, offering flexibility for teachers and learners (Rajat et al., 2020; Mahyoob, 2020; Bataineh et al., 2021; Kundu & Bej, 2021b; Kundu & Bej, 2021c).

This research involves the detailed study of an Indian EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teacher's perspectives on digital pedagogy before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic, with an emphasis on professional competence and teaching behaviours. The phenomenological approach (refer Neubauer, Witkop & Varpio, 2019) would be helpful to glean new insights on digital pedagogy to create a more adaptive and resilient education system in the post-pandemic age. It looks into the effects of these changes as well as the system's capacity to absorb the beneficial adjustments. The basic research questions set for this investigation include:

1. How did the teacher find digital pedagogy before the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. How did he find digital pedagogy during the COVID-19 pandemic?
3. How did he find digital pedagogy during the post-COVID-19 era?

RESEARCH CONTEXT

In the 21st century, technology and data have become integral to education, with digital skills becoming increasingly important. Education has transitioned from traditional classrooms to online learning, supplemented by mobile phones. This allows students to attend classes from anywhere, facilitates quick communication, and allows access to information via smartphones. Here, teachers have a crucial role in incorporating ICT into their regular classes, as well as preparing students for today's digital world (UNESCO, 2011).

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