World Universities' Response to COVID-19: Remote Online Language-Teaching

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- Conclusion

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Project outline

- Emergency period March-July 2020
- Collection of
  - 24 case studies (35 contrbutors)
  - 22 universities
  - 19 countries
  - 5 continents
  - 15 reviewers
  - 3 x peer reviewed
- Editors:
  - N. Radić, University of Cambridge,
  - A.A. Atabekova, RUDN University, Moscow, Russia,
  - M. Freddi, University of Pavia, Italy
  - J. Schmied, University of Chemnitz, Germany

- Financial support: Cambridge and RUDN
- Publisher: https://research-publishing.net/
- May 2021

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Partners

- Is a peer and externally reviewed collection of case studies

- It analyses the nature of different educational response to lockdown measures

- Describes and evaluates the deployment of technology in remote language teaching

- Discusses methodological issues

- Evaluates resources, teacher training/support as well as student accessibility issues

- Discusses the relevant managerial challenges

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Aims

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- The aim of this Project is to document the Higher Education pedagogical responses to the COVID-19 emergency in 2020;

- To bring together international language teaching professionals around a common pedagogical platform;

- To encourage active and meaningful global networking;

- To trace the path to a range of flexible and diverse approaches to language teaching and learning

- Sketch a proposal for new language -teaching paradigm

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Common study structure

- Institutional, cultural and academic background
- Type of course
- Usual and emergency delivery patterns
- Technology deployed
- Teacher training and support
- Student and teaching staff feedback
- Teaching/learning outcomes
- Discussion/Lessons learnt
- Limitations
- Conclusion and the way forward

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Intercultural aspects

- Asked by Arab colleagues to meet F2F
- A university in Iran rang all 15,000 students
- One institution held emergency meeting at highest level and cascaded way forward rules, regulations and funds
- Teaching different language in different settings to diverse student populations

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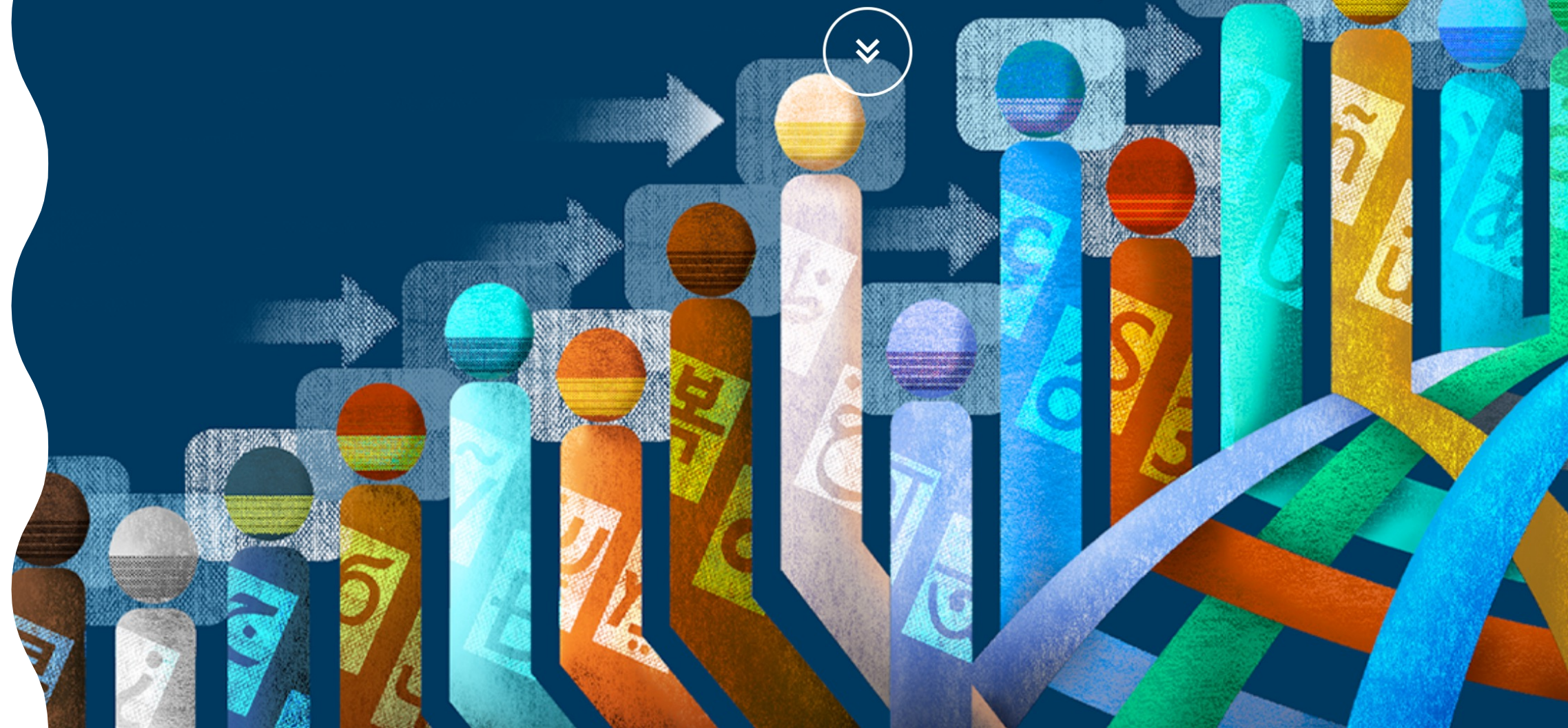
Managerial aspects

- Teachers of one course
- Coordinators of languages
- Directors of programmes
- University-level policy makers

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Key Concepts

- Remote
- Online
- Blended-learning
- Flipped classroom
- Hybrid teaching
- Synchronous and asynchronous

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The Research Questions

1. What was the decision-making process like in shifting to remote online teaching? Were the changes implemented in top-down or bottom- up fashion?

2. Technology, administration, or pedagogy, which was the driving force for change?

3. Predictably, responses to the emergency varied depending on the specific contexts. However, is it possible to discern some patterns emerging?

4. How have teachers managed to maintain or include interactive elements in their teaching?

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The Research Questions

5. How learner-centred was the switch to remote online teaching?

6. How were task-based approaches included in remote online teaching?

7. To what extent was the process of moving to remote online teaching able to cater for the diversity of the student body?

8. What methodological developments did we record?

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Results Overview – Introductory Paper

- Each chapter explores the use of technology. This angle stands in line with the project rationale that focuses on remote online language teaching. What seems genuinely relevant for the contemporary landscape is that every author examines concrete tools for content delivery, students' self-study, and assessment issues.

- The authors are unanimous in prioritising the human factor and pedagogy that are considered the driving force to tailor the learning process to the remote context, to customise the technology to a diverse student body in terms of social, cultural, and academic background.

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Online remote language teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic has enforced the overall university community focus on "language as a social practice".

Highlighted is the critical importance of the teachers' and students' human side; their interaction.

Authors underline the importance of content adaptation, the specifics of course delivery, and implementation due to various learning activities.

The data reveals the ongoing adaptation of formative assessment to new contexts, the increasing role of teachers and students' feedback.

Following the pandemic, the digital and face-to-face modalities will co-exist and move beyond traditional institutional curriculum boundaries.

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Although learner-centred approaches are extremely important in modern foreign-language teaching, they were explicitly mentioned only rarely.

Thus, a lot of the group work and breakout room discussions can be included in this perspective.

The problems mentioned with reference to breakout rooms, however, are not more dramatic than in similar face-to-face activities and moving from a digital breakout room to another may even be easier and more effective.

The possibility to record group discussions more easily may even give teachers a chance to analyse activities afterwards and to adapt their teaching.

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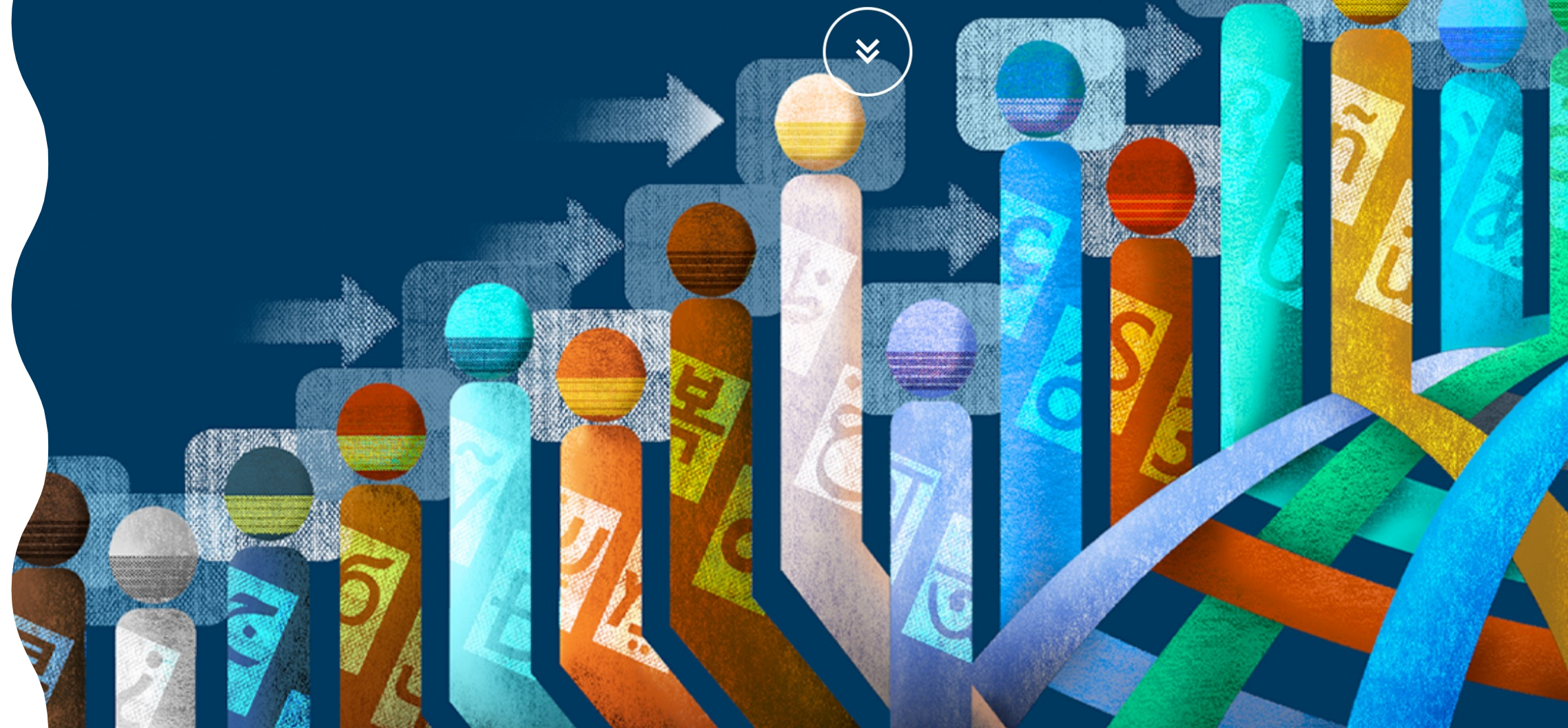
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Task-based learning is mentioned in many contributions, as it is part of a modern curriculum.

Tasks are discussed as a central element of learning in several contributions.

Of course, which tasks are possible in online teaching depends on the platform or tool used.

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That diversity of the student body is emphasised by the online shift is apparent in all the studies.

Diverse teaching approaches were used depending on, primarily, level of study (undergraduate, graduate and post-graduate), class size (ranging from small seminar to large lecture), and course objectives, i.e. general language or language for specific purposes.

Combined with the online mode, these traditional pedagogical distinctions brought about improved patterns of interaction, as different ways of managing interaction were experimented with, depending on level of study, class size, and course objective.

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Another evident development is what we could call the shift from *unintentionally blended* language teaching/learning to *blended by design.*

All of the studies show that the higher education system had already undergone an extensive digitalisation process long before the pandemic and that language education had already been using tools specific to teaching and learning such as Moodle to support face-to-face teaching.

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To conclude, this collection testifies to global language teaching efforts in higher education during the 2020 COVID-19 emergency period and will serve, we trust, as a useful point of reference.

Based on the collated evidence, we are proud to conclude that our profession rose magnificently to this specific challenge and that we are confident that it will continue to thrive in many diverse educational and learning contexts.

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Concluding Remark

- The way we communicate is changing
- The way we use language is changing
- Should the way we teach languages change?

Example

- Most job interviews are held online

- Is it not better to teach and practice the relevant language skills online?

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https://research-publishing.net

Book title: The world universities' response to COVID-19: remote online language teaching

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