

Handbook of Research on Historical Pandemic Analysis and the Social Implications of COVID-19

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A volume in the Advances in Human Services and
Public Health (AHSPH) Book Series

Published in the United States of America by

IGI Global
Information Science Reference (an imprint of IGI Global)
701 E. Chocolate Avenue
Hershey PA, USA 17033
Tel: 717-533-8845
Fax: 717-533-8661
E-mail: cust@igi-global.com
Web site: <http://www.igi-global.com>

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Cortijo Ocaña, Antonio, editor. | Martines, Vicent, 1965- editor.

Title: Handbook of research on historical pandemic analysis and the social implications of COVID-19 / Antonio Cortijo Ocaña, and Vicent Martines, editors.

Description: Hershey, PA : Information Science Reference, [2021] | Includes bibliographical references and index. | Summary: "In this book we explore the important role humanities has had when responding to threats posed by the pandemics throughout human history offering the answers that diverse fields in the humanities can contribute to our understanding of the current COVID pandemic and how to cope with it"-- Provided by publisher.

Identifiers: LCCN 2021016015 (print) | LCCN 2021016016 (ebook) | ISBN 9781799879879 (hardcover) | ISBN 9781799879893 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Epidemics--Social aspects. | COVID-19 (Disease)--Social aspects.

Classification: LCC RA651 .H57 2021 (print) | LCC RA651 (ebook) | DDC 614.5/92414--dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2021016015>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2021016016>

This book is published in the IGI Global book series Advances in Human Services and Public Health (AHSPH) (ISSN: 2475-6571; eISSN: 2475-658X)

British Cataloguing in Publication Data

A Cataloguing in Publication record for this book is available from the British Library.

All work contributed to this book is new, previously-unpublished material. The views expressed in this book are those of the authors, but not necessarily of the publisher.

For electronic access to this publication, please contact: eresources@igi-global.com.

Chapter 14

Jordi Casanovas’ #Coronavirusplays: Spanish and Catalan Micro- Theatre Within the Framework of the Project COVID-19 LiTraPan

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ABSTRACT

The outbreak of the SARS-CoV-2 and the diffusion of the COVID-19 disease had and still has a huge impact on the world’s population. The pandemic has also psychological implications and online activities can help to support people experiencing its consequences. The project COVID-19 LiTraPan aims to contribute to meet the needs that emerged during the pandemic in the field of humanistic higher education and quality assurance of distance learning. The line of research consists of the creation and study of corpora of works inspired and composed during the health emergency, and of their use for distance learning and discomfort management. In the first phase of development of the project, the author’s choice fell on the Spanish and Catalan microtheatre production published online as a result of the initiative #Coronavirusplays, launched by the playwright Jordi Casanovas on 13 March 2020, which ran until 8 May 2020. In this contribution, the author synthesizes the first results of the investigation and distance learning activities in the framework of the COVID-19 LiTraPan project.

INTRODUCTION

The worldwide outbreak of the SARS-CoV-2 and the global diffusion of the COVID-19 disease had and still has a huge impact on the world’s population and radically transformed the life of the planet’s inhabitants (Sohrabi et al., 2020; Sun et al., 2020). Indeed, this is an epochal event: the Spanish flu pandemic dates back to 1918-1920, while other epidemics had a heavy but different impact, as was the

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-7987-9.ch014

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case with the HIV, the SARS, Ebola, and the MERS (Coronaviridae Study Group of the International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses, 2020).

In the present situation, from the very beginning, the infection showed an uncommon virulence and aggression, it soon spread and became a worldwide health problem (She et al., 2020; Cheng & Shan, 2020). Consequently, people had to face with limitations in everyday life, social relationships, leisure activities and ways of working. As to be expected, the pandemic had also psychological implications and issues, such as typical acute stress responses, because it suddenly and unpredictably created a rapid and diffuse uncertainty, undermining the conviction of both our personal and societal sense of safety. The negative psychological impact of a pandemic, of the consequent quarantine and of other measures to combat it is well-known, due to its consequences for subjective as well as collective psychological health; although, this type of relapse is less visible than others (Brooks et al., 2020), and that is why psychological health is probably the most neglected aspect of the actual situation (Schimmenti et al., 2020, p. 41; Marazziti, 2020, pp. 39-40).

From a psychological point of view, the present pandemic needs attention and interventions in different fields of everyday life, such as supporting people in quarantine to cope with reclusion, isolation and other restrictions (Brooks et al., 2020). It also must be taken into consideration the unavoidable long-term psychological disorders and how to prevent them (Xiang et al., 2020; Srivatsa & Stewart, 2020; Marazziti & Stahl, in press) as well as the psychologically negative impact of the resulting economic crisis (Marazziti et al., 2020).

The most evident individual and societal reaction to this situation is the emergence of fear. According to recent studies (e.g. Schimmenti et al., 2020), at a psychological level the experiences related to fears and different forms of anxiety linked to the pandemic are manifested in four domains: corporal, interpersonal, cognitive and behavioral. The survey carried out describes these four domains and their characteristics and proposes some approach methodologies to manage their consequences (Schimmenti et al. 2020, 41). The classification of the four fear domains can be summarized as follows:

- **Corporal domain**: fear OF the body / fear FOR the body the subject perceives her/his body as a potential source of danger via infection, as a threat; or as a treasure that may be lost and that s/he must protect.
- **Interpersonal domain**: fear OF others / fear FOR others the subject perceives that the others could infect her/him; or that her/his beloved ones could be infected by others.
- **Cognitive domain**: fear OF knowing / fear of NOT knowing the subject avoids to know what s/he thinks is better left unknown; or s/he needs to know, due to the impression of partial and therefore unsettling knowledge of the pandemic.
- **Behavioral domain**: fear OF acting / fear of NOT acting the subject is afraid to take actions that could put her/him at risk of becoming infected; or s/he is afraid to be unable to act, even in case of actions that guarantee her/his safety.

These manifestations can alternate and coexist in the psychological response, even with its apparent opposite, in both individual and collective behavior (Schimmenti et al. 2020, 41). Facing these fears is critical on the individual level, but effective coping can also help the whole society to manage in a better way the situation. These are relevant aspects, because the resilience of a society dealing with a pandemic also depends on how its members endure their anxiety and fears of loneliness, contagion, death, etc. So, improving psychological health of individuals is decisive for strengthening the resilience of the whole

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society (Schimmenti et al., 2020, 41-43). In this regard, online interventions and activities can offer a valid approach to manage this situation and to support people experiencing the pandemic, the quarantine and living in isolation as a consequence of lockdown.

The Project COVID-19 LiTraPan

The Coronavirus pandemic and the resulting lockdown have changed our perception of space and time. Whereas previously there was an outer space and an inner space, during quarantine the situation changed and the individual found himself living in a single space, i.e. the place where he spent the lockdown. The distinction between the idea and perception of a public and external place (professional, leisure, etc.) and a private and internal place (personal, relaxation, etc.) has therefore disappeared. Similarly, the temporal dimension has also been altered: whereas previously there was a public-professional time and a private-leisure time, now in the single place in which the individual is confined, public time and private time also coexist and end up contaminating and overlapping each other. Thus, in the scenario generated by the pandemic and lockdown, existence flows in a mono-time within the mono-space in which one is confined. In these conditions, the web represents the 'window on the world' to carry out every activity and satisfy every need, whether business or leisure, public or private. The internet, ICT and social networks have become the main channel of communication and their use has changed. All this had two consequences: on one hand, there was an obligation to adapt each activity to the new context, for example by smart-working but also by enjoying remote leisure activities; on the other hand, it brought out strongly the need to express and share the experience we were having.

In the academic context, all kinds of activities have been brought online. For instance, there has been a move to distance learning and, as far as possible, individual and group research and dissemination have been organized through online initiatives. Instead, the field of artistic creation strongly manifested the overwhelming need to express the impactful experience of the pandemic and the lockdown, and this gave rise to an abundant and very interesting production.

All this, forms the basis of the project "COVID-19 LiTraPan – Literary Training via ICT for Higher Education Improvement, Behavioral Coaching and Discomfort Management during the COVID-19 Pandemic", designed and developed since March 2020 by three universities: University of Turin, University of Alicante and University of California Santa Barbara, under the co-direction of three principal investigators: Veronica Orazi (UniTo), Vicent Martines (UA) and Antonio Cortijo Ocaña (UCSB).

In the context of the current pandemic, since the health crisis has emerged in Europe in early 2020, participants have adapted their teaching and research/dissemination activities to the situation. To this purpose, they have taken advantage of ICT, an effective and strategic tool to support higher education/research, behavioral coaching and discomfort management in the current scenario. In parallel, they have begun to study cases of the literarization of past pandemics and the artistic production reflecting individual and collective reactions to the actual spread of COVID-19 disease, published and disseminated through the Internet and social networks.

The project fits in with the lines of research that characterize the present situation and the progressive approximation to the new reality: indeed, in recent months studies have appeared that are capable of reorienting teaching/learning and research/dissemination and promoting innovation (such as the monograph *The COVID-19 Outbreak* published in the journal *Clinical Neuropsychiatry*, 17(2), 2020; or materials published by the UNESCO member International Association of Universities, <https://www.iau-aiu.net/Covid-19-Higher-Education-challenges-and-responses>). Such contributions study the

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alteration of space-time perception, isolation and its consequences, the change in interpersonal dynamics and the resulting behavioral responses, the need to manage stress and consolidate resilience, etc. As far as ICT is concerned, the experience of the emergency shows that there is an urgent need to meet the strong demand for direct contact in the distance learning (synchronous mode), in order to contain the discomfort (operational and psychological) produced by distancing and to enhance the inclusion and active participation of the students. However, this requirement comes up against critical issues arising from the intensive use of web conference systems, in terms of data flow, ability to manage it and connection quality assurance.

The Project COVID-19 LiTraPan aims to contribute to meet the needs that emerged during the pandemic in the field of humanistic higher education and the quality of distance learning applied to it. This goal concerns the initial phase and the progressive improvement of the situation, but also the future perspective of the new reality that this epochal event has inaugurated. To this purpose, a number of key aspects have been identified, such as context (relationship between society and the digital world), communication (synchronous, asynchronous, blended), information (transmission of content), method (*lectiones magistrales*, flipped teaching, group work), experience processing (stress management, resilience) and organization (innovation, coordination, external collaborations, optimization of ICT).

The objectives are, on one hand, the definition of innovative and inclusive methodological and process solutions, the enhancement of teacher-student interaction and the active participation of the latter; on the other hand, the promotion of behavioral coaching and management of stress caused by the pandemic in the academic context (concerning both teachers and students, in the field of teaching, learning, research and dissemination of knowledge), thanks to the internet and social networks, which are at the same time recipients and vehicles of the discomfort/well-being of citizens/users. This will result in a flexible model based on ICT optimization, adaptable to different areas of the Humanities and replicable on a large scale.

To achieve the stated aims, the project will implement: A) the creation of corpora (content on the artistic transposition of the pandemic experience, in past eras and in the present); B) improvement of distance learning (especially synchronous); C) group problematization of the emergency situation to consolidate resilience (starting from and through the above two points).

In the first phase of the project, the census and collection of disciplinary content, inspired by the pandemic experience, created and disseminated via the web during the emergency, began in order to create and to feed corpora for use in disciplinary teaching, individual and group research, discomfort management and resilience building.

So, during the first semester of the a.y. 2020-2021 (October-December), a selection of the corpora content was used for disciplinary teaching, both at the level of the lessons taught and the assignment of Bachelor's and Master's degrees thesis. Both the work and research in the field and the planning and implementation of the flexible distance learning model to be designed for the linguistic-literary domain have been initiated. All this was planned to create a model of distance learning suitable for the different disciplines of the Humanities, in which the content used in the pilot experiment was replaceable and adaptable to other areas of the Humanities.

With regard to research, the three partner Universities which collaborate in the project are carrying out intensive synergistic work, that has been formalized by an international collaboration agreement. This agreement covers the creation and analysis of corpora, the strengthening of distance learning through improved/innovative application of ICT to higher education in the field of Humanities and the study of literarization of past and present pandemic experiences. The first phase results of the survey was presented on May and June 2020 within a cycle of videoconferences (*Coneixement en temps de pandèmia*,

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22.05.20-22.06.20, <https://web.ua.es/es/seus/lanucia/documentos/actividades-culturales/2019-2020/cicle-pandemia.pdf>) and an International Virtual Symposium (*Forbidden Delights*, 19-20.06.20, <http://delits.ivitra.ua.es>) organized by the University of Alicante (Seu Universitària de la Nucia).

These interdisciplinary seminary activities in the field of Humanities will continue to be carried out, strengthening the network of international collaborations of the three Universities that manage the project. Through the broadcasting and recording of video conferences, video seminars, teleconferences and virtual forums for future use in teaching and research and their dissemination in other contexts, an international community of teachers, scholars, Bachelor, Master and PhD students has already begun to be created to work on the subject, taking advantage of the corpora created. Regarding the latter, have already been collected: microplays, plays, tales and short stories, comics and graphic novels, etc., which use literary expression (utopian or dystopian, fantastic and neo-fantastic, comic-humorous and parodic, absurd and non-sense, catastrophic, apocalyptic, terror/horror genres, science fiction, etc.) as an instrument to elaborate stress/trauma and overcome the crisis. This will make it possible, also thanks to ICT, to develop a methodological model for managing the new teaching and research dimension –either virtually or blended, depending on the evolution of the health emergency– and the elaboration of stress/trauma caused by the crisis.

CORPORA AND THE PERSONAL RESEARCH LINE**Corpora**

As mentioned, from the very beginning of the Coronavirus pandemic, a rich artistic production appeared, inspired by the situation, expressing the experience that was being lived and conceived to be spread through the web and social networks. The creation of works expressing different art forms for dissemination through the Internet is a phenomenon that existed before the health emergency, but grew exponentially during the quarantine. However, if before this trend was an experimental mode of creation, later on the need to share the experience of the present pandemic and the fact of having the net and social networks as a privileged channel of communication gave a strong boost to this tendency. To recall just a few examples of the different types of artistic manifestations and works that have appeared since the beginning of the pandemic, we can mention the following:

- Theatre
 - Jordi Casanovas, *#Coronavirusplays*, since 13.03.2020 until 08.05.2020, when the play *La nova normalitat* was published by the Dramaturg@s de Sants.
 - Ovejas Muertas – Colectivo del Texto, *Dramaturgia Express en el Confinamiento*, since 19.03.2020, <https://ovejasmuertas.wordpress.com/category/coronavirus/page/4/>.
 - *Revista Godot de Teatro*, Coronavirus ¿Comedia o tragedia? since 27.03.2020, <http://www.revistagodot.com/coronavirus-comedia-o-tragedia/>.
- Tales and short stories
 - AA.VV., *Cuarenta cuentos en cuarentena*, proyecto literario surgido durante la pandemia por Coronavirus del 2020, <https://farraguas.com/project/cuarenta-cuentos-en-cuarentena/>.
 - *Relatos de confinamiento*, in Spanish and Catalan, published in the Sección Cultura of *La Vanguardia*, 43 stories written by journalists and writers, since 29.03.2020.

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- *Palabras para la pandemia*, published in the Sección Cultura of *VozPópuli*, a digital information medium, which offers the resemantization and literarization of the definitions of some pandemic keywords, as for instance: *alegría, balcón, casa, esperanza*, etc., written by writers such as José María Merino, Manuel Vals, Marta Sanz, Carlos Zanón, etc., since 27.03.2020.
- Comics and graphic novels
 - David Ramírez, *CONviVIenDo 19 días*, since 10.04.2020 until 17.08.2020, in which the author narrates his experience with his husband, who has been infected; the paper edition appeared on December 2020 (Ramírez, 2020).
 - Álvaro Ortiz, *El murciélago sale a por birras*, a parody of Batman character, who, in the middle of a worldwide pandemic lockdown, runs out of beer and decides to skip quarantine to find one in the middle of an empty and completely closed city (Ortiz, 2020).
 - Max, *Manifiestamente anormal (Panfleto y catarsis)*, published on June 2020 (Max, 2020).
- Photography
 - COVID PHOTO DIARIES, a collective of eight Spanish photographers, who created *Ocho historias breves de la pandemia*, published on 04.05.2020, <https://poylatam.org/ocho-historias-breves-de-la-pandemia/>.
- Bands
 - Stay Homas, a Catalan musical trio who composed their songs in the flat where the three musicians were confined and broadcasted them on Youtube and social networks.

The Personal Research Line: Jordi Casanovas' #Coronavirusplays

My personal line of research in the frame of the planned activities during the first phase of the project consists of the creation and study of the corpora (especially the content concerning the dramatic production, both in Spanish and Catalan) and of the use of a selection of texts for groundbreaking teaching and stress management in the classroom. My choice fell on the microtheatre production in Spanish and Catalan published on Twitter when the playwright Jordi Casanovas launched the initiative #Coronavirusplays on 13 March 2020, which ran until 8 May 2020.

Jordi Casanovas i Güell (Vilafranca del Penedès, 1978) is a playwright and theatre director trained at the Institut del Teatre and the Sala Beckett in Barcelona (Prieto, 2005; Foguet, 2007; Casanovas, 2009; Corrons, 2011; Pérez-Rasilla, 2012; Saumell, 2012; Romaní, 2014). He is the author of more than thirty plays, among which a trilogy on Catalan identity (Orazi, 2018) –*Una història catalana* (2011, new version in 2013) (Casanovas 2011; Casanovas 2013), *Pàtria* (2012) (Casanovas 2012) and *Vilafranca. Un dinar de Festa major* (2015) (Casanovas 2015)– and *Alguns dies d'ahir* (2020) about the most decisive months in recent Catalan history (September-December 2017). Other recent plays to be mentioned are: *Sopar amb batalla* (2020); *Valenciana. La realitat no és suficient* and *La dansa de la vengança* (2019); *Jauria, Filoctetes (versión después de Sófocles)* and *Mala broma* (2018); *Danza macabra (versión después de Strindberg)* and *Gazoline* (2017); *Port Arthur* and *Cervantes, el último Quijote* (2016); *Hey boy, hey girl (a partir de Romeo y Julieta de Shakespeare)* and *Idiota* (2015). Moreover, in 2015 he presented *B, la película*, on the theme of corruption, a film adaptation of his play *Ruz-Bárceñas* (2014), based on Judge Pablo Ruz's second interrogation of Luis Bárceñas, former treasurer of the Partido Popular, from Bárceñas' own statements on 15 July 2013 in the Audiencia Nacional. Two years later, the television adaptation of *Vilafranca* was filmed (2017). Since 2007, he has received several awards, such as Ciutat de

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València 2006, Crítica Barcelona 2007, Crítica “Serra d’Or” 2007, Butaca 2009, 2011 and 2016 for the best theatrical text, Time Out Barcelona 2010, Ciutat de Barcelona de Teatre 2012 and Tendències 2013.

In the context of the actual Coronavirus pandemic and the confinement, on 13 March 2020 Jordi Casanovas launched on Twitter his initiative #Coronavirusplays. He invited playwrights to compose microplays of about 500 words and post them on Twitter to share them through social media. At the same time, he encouraged actors and actresses to perform them, record their performance and post the video on Twitter (Polo, 2020). The proposal culminated with the collective play, entitled *La nova normalidad*, published on 8 May 2020, written by the collective Dramaturg@s de Sants, a group born during the confinement thanks to the initiative of Casanovas.

The result was a set of more than 100 microplays, which offers a minimalist and shocking choral fresco and reflects what we experienced in the months of March to May. The macro-theme of this textual corpus is the expression of the experience of the pandemic and quarantine from a personal perspective that, however, shows a very clear collective and even social vision. The corpus, in fact, deals with aspects that characterize the subjective and at the same time collective response to a situation as extreme as the one we are experiencing and their consequences. These microplays develop sub-themes declined in a series of variations related to a central nucleus (the general experience) that produce a kaleidoscopic multiperspectivism, i.e. a reflection of the personal experiences.

These microplays reaffirm the peculiarities of the subgenre of microtheatre, identified and studied by critics, which developed from at least the publication of the journal *Art Teatral* (1987) (Quiles, 1987), dedicated to the dissemination of such theatrical production and critical contributions on it. The above mentioned peculiarities are the minimalist format and –in recent times– the dissemination also through the web, topics based on current events, sometimes –as in the case of #Coronavirusplays– worked in real time; the development of a minimal discourse, emphasized by its very fragmentary nature, which fits in the testimonial dimension, generated by the need to express and share the lived experience but also by the will of social intervention, to propitiate awareness, problematization, and even a possible response. They are, therefore, microtexts for microshows conveyed also through social networks. These microplays reflect the minipoetics of microtheatre, based on the desire to achieve the maximum density, which determines the minimalist form, the hyper-brevity; the frequent use of the monologue (often with a single character), the strategic role of ellipsis and silence, which acquire a special meaning and amplify the dramatic tension; the semantic intensity, the speed and conciseness of the style; a simple, essential and dense language. In addition, all suprasegmental elements, such as accent, tone, intonation, pauses, and any other type of nonverbal code, acquire special relevance. The characters are already involved in the situation and in conflict from the outset, the space is unique, the time develops in a linear way and corresponds to the real duration of the representation: it is the time of a situation. The topics covered are either socio-political and related to current affairs or emotional, such as feelings of loneliness, isolation, disaffection, lack of love, human and physical contact. Humor, irony, satire, the absurd are also fundamental, as tools to overcome a negative reality and express a critical vision. Finally, there is sometimes a twist in the ending, which is often left open, implying an active attitude on the part of the audience who participates in the (co-)creation of meaning. The final twist suddenly subverts the perspective and makes it possible to understand the real dynamics between the characters, generating an often humorous and ironic effect, which the playwright uses to wink at the audience; the latter will have to absolve the author’s creatures, so human and therefore vulnerable and contradictory, stuck in an unprecedented, completely unexpected and dystopian experience such as a pandemic and its devastating relapses (López

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Mozo, 2007; Quiles, 2000; Orozco, 2006; Orozco, 2009; Orozco, 2009-2010; Orozco, 2011; Gutiérrez Carbajo, 2011; Montes, 2011; Gutiérrez Carbajo, 2013; Bennet, 2016).

Finally, these more than 100 microplays posted on Twitter from 13 March to the end of April are ideally projected towards *La nova normalitat*, the title of the aforementioned collective play (written by twelve playwrights) published on the same social network on 8 May 2020. The title is absolutely significant and expresses another compelling need: overcoming of the pandemic with all its relapses to reach the dimension that will be the 'new normal'. This will derive from the progressive extinction of the virus but also from what we will be tomorrow, after experiencing such a shocking situation and moments that surely have affected each one of us and the whole community.

I used a selection of microplays from the #Coronaviursplays initiative for my courses of Spanish Literature for Master degree students and of Catalan Language and Literature for Bachelor and Master degrees students, in the autumn semester (October-December) of the a.y. 2020-2021. These are distance learning courses that I gave in synchronous mode via Webex, recorded and published on a dedicated Moodle, along with supporting teaching materials. This experience allowed me and the students to problematize, raise awareness and begin to elaborate our personal experiences from the pandemic and confinement and to start progressively to overcome them, precisely taking advantage of these microplays.

From the study and analysis of these texts, we have begun to reflect on our personal experience, and this allowed us to recognize ourselves in the themes and figures that star in them, to distance ourselves from a complex event and begin to objectify it and then to observe it with a certain distancing. The fact of having realized this training through distance learning activities, therefore not through a face-to-face teaching, not only did not represent any obstacle, but quite the opposite: we took advantage of the necessary use of the 'screen' to establish a contact and a mediated communication that helped us to express very personal feelings, impressions and reactions. In this way we felt less exposed when it came to opening up ourselves, describing and objectifying our individual experience which, even so and as expected, led to the emergence of shared elements and mechanisms. This helped us to perceive ourselves as a part of the collective fresco that the microplays of the #Coronavirusplays initiative presented and in which we saw ourselves reflected. In addition, distance learning made it possible to involve all students (those who did not live in town or who had returned to their place of origin, those who worked, those with young children who could not always connect to the class time due to the home organization, etc.). All students, indeed, had the recordings of the classes published on the Moodle platform and virtual space through the same Webex platform for moments of collective reflection/elaboration or exchange of perspectives, ideas, etc.

A further element that allowed us to take full advantage of these materials was their nature and literary form. In fact, most if not all of these microplays are monologues: now, it is well known that the monologue is not a monolithic form, but rather a diversified one, and it is worth pointing out some of its internal mechanisms of functioning, in order to understand how useful it can be for the use we made of it. The main features of the monologue and its possible declensions were masterfully taken advantage of by the playwrights who participated in #Coronavirusplays initiative, to reflect certain psychological reactions in which once again we can recognize ourselves. Therefore, this form proved to be absolutely effective to begin to objectify and elaborate the experiences we lived.

The microplays resulting from this initiative feature monologues of different types. In fact, although some of them are dialogues between two or three characters, the form favoured by the authors is the monolog structure with its different typologies. In order to adequately analyze the variety of its realizations, it is necessary to briefly recall the nature of the monologue and to summarize its different typolo-

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gies and sub-typologies in a scheme. Starting from the idea that every enunciation process is based on the communicative couple Locutor > Recipient, we can easily understand that text-based theatre is in turn founded on a dialogue statute built on words, which can also take the form of a monologue (Orazi, 1996; Sanchis Sinisterra, 2009; Orazi, 2014).

In the monologue, the Locutor (or monologuing subject) addresses himself (he pronounces a soliloquy or an aside), or another subject (another character or even an object), or the audience (breaking the fourth wall). When the Locutor addresses himself, he coincides with the Recipient and several possibilities occur: the Locutor addresses himself in the first person (integrated 'I' monologue), or in the second person (monologue of the split Ego), or he even addresses himself in different persons (multiple Ego monologue).

When the Locutor addresses a Recipient (another character), only one person (the Locutor) speaks or only the Locutor's speech is perceived (e.g. the Locutor speaks on the phone). In the latter case, the Recipient can be present on stage (scenic Recipient) or not (extra-scenic, absent Recipient). When we face an absent Recipient, the communication is mediated (telephone, video call, etc.) and the Locutor's interventions are determined and dynamized by the replies of the Recipient (who gives an inaudible speech); the latter's words, on the other hand, are deduced from the Locutor's own words. This implies a deductive audience, who is able to reconstruct the dialogue through the words of the Locutor, the only ones that can be heard. Only in this way will a truly effective discursive back-feeding circuit be achieved.

Therefore, when selecting the microplays to work with during my fall courses in the a.y. 2020-2021, I took into account different factors: the typologies of fears and anxieties with the respective relapses they developed –that is, impact on the corporal, interpersonal, cognitive and behavioral domains–; the typologies of dialogue they developed, such as dialogue between two or more characters, or the monologue in its different varieties (integrated 'I' monologue, split Ego monologue, or very often the monologue of a Locutor who addresses a Recipient, which in these microplays is generally an extra-scenic figure with whom the protagonist establishes a mediated communication, by telephone, by video call, etc.).

Some of these categories and sub-categories revealed especially effective for distance learning courses gave through a synchronous mode. This was the case, for example, of monologues in which the protagonist of the microplay has a mediated conversation with another character, over the phone, a video call or a recording. This structure allowed me, during the initial presentation of the microplay through its reading, to realistically reproduce the situation presented, because I myself could 'perform' in an identical context what the text presented (for example, a video call).

In order to offer a sample of what we did, I have selected some microplays and focused them according to the features I mentioned. In this way, it will be possible to illustrate their characteristics and how they can be used during the courses to achieve the objectives of the project. Therefore, I outlined the fundamental aspects of the selected microplays, emphasizing in this way what the methodological approach of the analysis has been:

1. Jordi Casanovas, *Paranoia*, Catalan, 13.03.2020
 - a. Protagonist: ELLA, delivers a Monologue
 - b. Locutor: I > Recipient: You, extra-scenic character (a friend)
 - c. Mediated communication: phone call
 - d. Topic/s: COVID-19 contagion
 - e. Literary frame/features: absurd / *non-sense* genre, comic and humorous effect
 - f. Final twist that subverts the situation and makes it humorous

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- g. Open-ending
 - h. Fear: interpersonal domain – fear of others
2. Roger Torns, *Casa*, Catalan, 13.03.2020
 - a. Protagonist: Helena, delivers a Monologue
 - b. Locutor: I > Recipients: You, extra-scenic characters (1. her mother, 2. Marc)
 - c. Mediated communication: video call (with her mother), voice message on the mobile phone (for Marc)
 - d. Topic/s: COVID-19 contagion, quarantine, incommunicability, loneliness, lack of (human, physical) contact
 - e. Literary frame/features: absurd / *non-sense* genre, comic and humorous effect
 - f. Final twist that subverts the situation and introduces a certain bitter humor
 - g. Open-ending
 - h. Fear: corporal domain – fear for the body (that her beloved ones could be infected and die) / behavioral domain – fear of not acting (fear of loneliness)
 3. Denise Duncan, *Llama al 112*, Spanish, 14.03.2020
 - a. Protagonist: ELLA, delivers a Monologue
 - b. Locutor: I > Recipient: You, extra-scenic character (her mother)
 - c. Mediated communication: phone call
 - d. Topic/s: COVID-19 contagion
 - e. Literary frame/features: dramatic genre
 - f. Crescendo
 - g. Open-ending
 - h. Fear: corporal domain – fear for the body (that her beloved ones could be infected) / behavioral domain – fear of not acting (fear of loneliness)
 4. Laura Lázaro, *La crisi dels 40 (Coronavirus edition)*, Catalan, 14.03.2020
 - a. Protagonists: Anna and Miquel, maintain a Dialogue
 - b. Locutor: both, alternatively
 - c. Communication: direct
 - d. Topic/s: partner crisis, inauthenticity of personal choices, change of sexual orientation
 - e. Literary frame/features: dramatic-sentimental genre
 - f. Final twist that subverts the situation, cynicism and bitter humor
 - g. Open-ending
 - h. Fear: behavioral domain – fear of not acting (continuing with an inauthentic life / fear of loneliness)
 5. Silvia Navarro, *Cancún*, Catalan, 14.03.2020
 - a. Protagonist: a., delivers a Monologue
 - b. Locutor: I > Recipient: You, extra-scenic character (her grandmother)
 - c. Mediated communication: through the glass wall of the room in an old people's home
 - d. Topic/s: relationship with the elderly, examination of conscience and of personal conduct
 - e. Literary frame/features: dramatic genre with notes of (bitter) humor
 - f. Open-ending
 - g. Fear: corporal domain – fear for the body (that a beloved one could be infected and die)
 6. Inge Martín, *Sin título*, Spanish, 15.03.2020
 - a. Protagonist: PERSONA, delivers a Monologue

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- b. Locutor: I > Recipient/s: You (sing. and pl.), extra-scenic generic character/s
 - c. Mediated communication: deferred, a recorded video message with the computer
 - d. Topic/s: extinction of the human mankind
 - e. Literary frame/features: dystopian, terror, catastrophist, apocalyptic genres
 - f. Open-ending
 - g. Fear: interpersonal domain – fear of ‘others’ (monstrous creatures)
7. Alejo Levis, *Infodemia*, Spanish, 16.03.2020
- a. Protagonist: unnamed, delivers a Monologue
 - b. Locutor: I > Recipient: You, extra-scenic character (not specified)
 - c. Mediated communication: phone call or video call (not specified)
 - d. Topic/s: manipulation of information and its relapses, plotting / conspiracy theories
 - e. Literary frame/features: absurd, *non-sense*, grotesque, comic-humoristic genres, parody of the apocalyptic genre
 - f. Open-ending
 - g. Fear: cognitive domain – fear of not knowing (parodic distortion of the need for information)
8. Jaume Viñas, *Lombardia*, Catalan, 16.03.2020
- a. Protagonists: Laila and Bruno, maintain a Dialogue
 - b. Locutor: both, alternatively
 - c. Communication: direct
 - d. Topic/s: crisis of the healthcare system and triage (who can and cannot be assisted)
 - e. Literary frame/features: dramatic genre
 - f. Open-ending
 - g. Fear: behavioral domain – fear of acting (the difficulties of the two young doctors in dealing with triage)
9. Alejo Levis, *El producto estrella*, Spanish, 18.03.2020
- a. Protagonist: PUBLICISTA, delivers a Monologue
 - b. Locutor: I > Recipient/s: You (sing. and pl.), extra-scenic generic character/s
 - c. Mediated communication: videoconference / video recording (not specified), simulating advertisement language
 - d. Topic/s: irrational manias engendered by the pandemic (compulsive toilet paper shopping)
 - e. Literary frame/features: absurd, *non-sense*, comic-humoristic genres
 - f. Open-ending
 - g. Fear: behavioral domain – fear of not acting (putting livelihoods at risk for lack of something essential)
10. Esther Lázaro, *Teleasistencia psicológica*, Spanish, 19.03.2020
- a. Protagonist: ÉL/ELLA (not specified), delivers a Monologue
 - b. Locutor: I > Recipient: You, extra-scenic character (a psychologist)
 - c. Mediated communication: video interview
 - d. Topic/s: experience of the loss of a beloved one by COVID-19 and its psychological relapses
 - e. Literary frame/features: dramatic genre
 - f. Open-ending
 - g. Fear: co-existence of different fears, which generates a situation/feelings of vulnerability;
 - corporal domain – fear of/for the body
 - interpersonal domain – fear of/for others

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cognitive domain – fear of knowing/not knowing

behavioral domain– fear of acting/not acting

11. Juan Manuel Casero, *Manualparainconscientes*, Spanish, 22.03.2020
 - a. Protagonists: a character and a spectator
 - b. Locutor: I > Recipient: I, integrated 'I' Monologue, soliloquy/stream of consciousness
 - c. Mediated communication: the protagonist indirectly pronounces his Monologue; he does not speak during the whole development of the microplay; the spectator reads a text written by the main character, in which his experience of confinement is described in a fragmentary way
 - d. Topic/s: alienation caused by the experience of the pandemic and quarantine
 - e. Literary frame/features: dramatic genre, experimentalism (stream of consciousness, meta-theatre estrangement, breaking of the fourth wall)
 - f. Open-ending
 - g. Fear: more than fear/s, the text describes a state of annihilation and the anxieties that accompany it; all this is reflected in the absolute unwillingness to act, even to eat, to have contacts, to talk to others; the microplay presents an individual who has been turned off by the experience of the pandemic and confinement, and who is in a depressed situation.

To present a practical demonstration of the work done in class with the students, I will briefly analyze two microplays, one in Spanish and one in Catalan, which share some significant elements. In this way it will be possible to understand the different treatment of common aspects by each playwright and how these texts can be used to achieve the goals of the project. The two microplays I selected are *Casa* by Roger Torns (13.03.2020) and *Llama al 112* by Denise Duncan (14.03.2020).

Roger Torns, *Casa*

Helena porta els cascots posats i quan parla es dirigeix a la càmera de la pantalla de l'ordenador. Es va movent per casa

HELENA – Ei Mama, com estàs? (...) Sí, he anat a comprar aquest matí. (...) No ho sé, coses... (...) ja, ja ho sé, però tampoc cal que ens tornem bojós. No, no t'estic dient que... (...) és igual... (...) Sí, al final han caigut tots els bols. Que jo ho entenc, eh, vull dir, s'ha de ser responsable i... i això. (...) Doncs, mira, no ens paguen res. Com és per força major, no estem coberts per enlloc. Aquest mes no cobraré res. Una merda. (...) Ja mama... (...) escolta, no comencis. (...) Sí, em vaig tallar el cabell. (...) Gràcies, tu també. (...) Que sí que estàs guapa. (...) Ja, ja ho sé que ens hem de veure més, per això t'he dit de fer l'skype. (...) Ja, però és que tu tampoc vols fer skype mai. (...) Ja, ja sé que voldries que vingués més. Si fos per tu ja m'hauria instal·lat a casa vostra fa temps. (...) Ai mama, ens veiem cada dos caps de setmana i baixeu sovint a dinar, tampoc és per tant. Quan vivíem junts ens veiem menys. (...) Sí home, però què dius? Com vols que vingui a passar el confinament amb vosaltres? (...) Que no mama, que no. (...) Doncs perquè el que no hem de fer és moure'ns amunt i avall, el que hem de fer és quedar-nos a casa i... (...) i ja està. (...) Perquè no podem anar passejant el virus per tota Catalunya. A veure, jo no sé si el tinc. Potser el podria tenir i encara no... potser de cop el tinc, i d'aquí uns dies me'n surto, el passo i... (...) i és com una petita grip, i au... (...) però si... (...) però si... (...) mama em deixes parlar un moment? Gràcies (Silenci). Dic que... que si el tinc i vinc i us el passo... (...) allà encara no teniu cap cas, no? (...). Si més no al poble ara... (...). Doncs això, doncs si vinc i el tinc i us el passo (...) que sí mama, que us el podria passar i vosaltres ja esteu... què? No... sí, a veure sí. Esteu

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grans. Esteu grans ja i s'ha d'anar amb compte. I estan dient que hem d'anar amb compte perquè sou com... com el target de risc. (...) El target. (...) El target és com..., a qui va dirigit el producte que vols vendre. (...) Que no, Que no estic parlant que el virus sigui... (...) Ai, prou. Que no vindré i ja està. Que em quedaré a casa i ja... (...) Sola. Sí, sola a casa. Què passa? (...) Ja hi som? Sola estic bé, no tinc cap problema, visc molt bé i molt tranquil·la. Ja n'hem parlat mil vegades. (...) Doncs ja està. (...) El president? Sí, fes. És clar. Ja parlarem. (...) No, no el veuré el president a la tele. (...) Doncs perquè ja el veuré ara a twitter d'aquí una estona, ara estava parlant amb tu. D'acord. Apa, adios.

Penja la trucada. Agafa el telèfon i envia un àudio

HELENA – Ei Marc, com estàs? Què, com portes el confinament? Jo porto només un dia i ja estic que em pujo per les parets. He vist que heu penjat les vostres obres de teatre a les xarxes perquè les pugui veure tothom. Em sembla super-guai. En fi. Què fas aquesta nit? Vols venir a casa? Podríem passar el confinament junts.

FINAL

Casa is a monologue in which a daughter makes a skype call with her mother and finally leaves a voice message to her friend Marc. In the monologue, the Locutor (the daughter) addresses another subject (the mother), i.e. an extra-stage character (absent); finally, she addresses another subject (Marc), also extra-scenic and even more distant (the protagonist does not have any conversation with him and the contact is deferred). Therefore, communication between the characters is mediated: by the screen during the video call and then by recording a voice message with the mobile phone. Viewers perceive only the words of the Locutor and deduce what the Recipient says (in this case, the mother) through the responses of the protagonist (the mother's speech is inaudible). The playwright works this interaction in an absolutely effective way and avoids the risk of the speaker's monologue becoming overloaded by too frequent explicit repetitions. That is, Roger Torns manages to build a balanced discursive feedback circuit. Instead, the lack of response from Marc (the recipient of the voice message) introduces a twist and realizes the open ending, because we do not know neither his response nor the extra-textual and extra-stage development of the story. In the text, the characters are ordinary people and the topic is the lack of communication, as we only understand in the open-ending that follows the plot twist: apparently mother and daughter communicate and yet what we see and hear does not correspond to the real thought and feelings of the protagonist. The daughter, in fact, does not express herself frankly and we understand that what she says and her own way of behaving are affected and distorted by her emotional, self-esteem and communicative problems.

All this is outlined through the (instrumentalization of) the fear of the body (the risk of infection) and the fear for the body of others (that her parents get sick); the text denounces a parent-son relationship affected by hypocrisy and emphasized by confinement, which at the same time generates the urgent emotional and physical need to share this destabilizing experience.

In this scenario, we understand the importance of silence, of the unspoken, of what the characters are not able to express openly and yet still manifest through what they shut up and non-verbal codes. The twist and the open-ending suddenly subvert the perspective and allow us to understand the real dynamics between the characters, while generating a humorous and ironic effect.

Jordi Casanovas' #CoronavirusplaysDenise Duncan, *Llama al 112**ELLA se pasea por el salón, en pijama, con una taza de té en la mano. Habla por teléfono*

ELLA – No, estaba viendo una serie. ¿Cómo estáis? No, no nos hemos ido a la montaña, ahora mismo no está la cosa para... Ya. ¿Qué pasa? Mama, ya... sí, entiendo. No, a ver, mama, respira primero. ¿Qué pasa? No, no puedo venir. No tengo con quien dejar al niño. Está trabajando. No, no hace turno de noche pero ahora no hay turnos, en el hospital están a... ya. ¡Ninguna enfermera se iría a casa en este momento por...! Ya. Ya. Bueno, tiene dos mamás pero una de las mamás... mira, no es el momento de... No, no es eso lo que ha dicho el presidente, mama. A esta hora nadie me creería que voy a lavar ropa, pero en todo caso no es... no tengo con quien dejar al peque, te lo acabo de decir. Mama, necesito que respire y me expliques exactamente qué ha pasado. Respira. Venga, que sí, que sí puedes... ¿Cuál quieres que te cante? ¿En serio? Vale. Pero, mientras yo canto, tú prométeme que te pondrás a respirar. No, la del fuego es para activarse, ¿para qué cojones vas a yoga si no prestas atención? Vale, lo siento. Sí. (canta el estribillo de "Cielito lindo") "Ay, ay, ay, ay, canta y no llores, porque cantando se alegran, Cielito lindo, ..." ¡Mamá! No llores, me has pedido que cantara Cielito...! Por favor, necesito que te calmes y me lo expliques. Ponme al papa. ¡Ponme al papa! ¿Qué? (Pausa) ¿Me lo puedes repetir? ¿Has llamado al 061? Claro, estarán desbordadas, ya, sí, pero... ¿el papa se puede poner? ¿Le has medido la tensión? ¿Mama? JODER MAMA, ¿le has medido la tensión? Midesela. Ya. ¿Tienes el aparato que os regalamos? Sí, ese, el del oxígeno. Mírale eso también y... Hostia puta. Mama, tienes que calmarte por favor. Llama al 061 otra vez. ¡No, llama al 112! Joder. No, el 061 es para casos... ¡Llama al 112, es el de cuestiones de vida o de muerte! Sí. Joder. Joder. Joder. Sí. Ahora mismo lo visto y vamos para allá. ¡Llama al 112, mama, y por favor respira! Yo también te quiero (cuelga).

Llama al 112 is also a monologue in which the characters are common figures: a daughter who talks to her mother, this time by telephone. Once again, therefore: in the protagonist's monologue, the Locutor (the daughter) addresses another subject (the mother), an extra-stage character (absent); the communication is mediated: the two women talk on the phone and the viewers only hear the words of the Locutor and deduce what the Recipient says through the protagonist's answers (the mother's speech is inaudible). Here again, the playwright constructs an effective mechanism of discursive back-processing without overloading the text with frequent iterations. Nevertheless, in this case the communication has not been planned: the two women have not agreed to talk to each other, but it is the mother who unexpectedly calls her daughter, in an evident state of emotional alteration. The protagonist and the viewers are unaware of what is happening and the mother's excitement does not allow for an immediate understanding of the situation. In this way, the playwright presents an immediate suspense and the gradual unravelling of what is happening is skilfully measured and slowed down by the mother's inability to manage her own reactions, the nature and gravity of which are ignored until the end. The theme is again the sudden discovery of the possible contagion of a beloved one (the father of the protagonist, husband of the co-protagonist) and the reactions that follow: the mother is in a state of confusion and is initially unable to make herself understood by her daughter, who reacts first with incredulity and then with fear because of the risk of a tragic outcome of the situation. All this is achieved through the mechanisms of manifestation of different fears: that which refers to the cognitive domain, when the mother finds it difficult to take on the situation and the daughter finds it hard to understand her; the corporal one, when both women end up sharing a fear for the safety of a beloved one (the father/husband); the behavioral

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one, when the mother, in a panic, is practically paralyzed, unable to act, and calls her daughter. The communication is frank and direct, slowed down at the beginning by the mother's emotional condition, which the playwright uses to build and dose the *crescendo* that will reach its climax in the protagonist's final words. The story develops in a linear way: begins with a momentary stalemate, and then goes on until the final. Even in this case, we have an open-ending which leaves hope for the viewer, who can imagine that the father of the protagonist will be saved. The effect here is dramatic, progressively emphasized by the gradual unravelling of what the two women are experiencing, i.e. a difficult moment that could turn tragic. It is precisely through the amplification of the dramatism that the author gradually arouses and intensifies the viewer's empathy with the characters. Duncan manages to facilitate the process of identification of the audience with the two women precisely because of the common and shared nature of the risk they are running.

CONCLUSION

The first phase of the COVID-19 LiTraPan project is making it possible to implement its key aspects, the realization and elaboration of which have given rise to comforting responses that confirm the correctness of the feasibility study which preceded its planning and the goodness of the first partial results, across the whole range of its achievements.

In particular, the first results of my individual research line have been illustrated on two occasions, in May and June 2020. Namely, in the framework of the initiative *Coneixement en temps de pandèmia*, cicle de conferències i diàlegs de la Seu Universitària de la Nucia (University of Alicante), directed by Vicent Martines, on 22.05.2020, I offered together with Antonio Cortijo Ocaña (University of California Santa Barbara) the conference *COVID-19 - Literatura, interculturalitat, TIC, entrenament conductal i gestió de l'estrès durant la pandèmia per Coronavirus* (Orazi & Cortijo 2020) to illustrate the project.

Then, on the occasion of the II International Symposium *Forbidden Delights: Sex, Eroticism, Beauty, Aesthetics, Pleasure, Law, Sin and Prohibition*, ISIC-IVITRA, Seu Universitària de la Nucia, University of Alicante, directed by Vicent Martines, on 19-20.06.2020, I reported on the progress of my personal research line in the intervention *Sex and the Pandemic in #Coronavirusplays*, within the section COVID-19 Literary Training via ICT for Higher Education Improvement, Behavioral Coaching and Discomfort Management during the Coronavirus Pandemic, dedicated to the University of Turin Branch of the project (Orazi 2020).

As planned, I also used some of the content of the corpora I created in the courses I taught during the first semester of the a.y. 2020-2021. For this purpose, I used a selection of microplays from the *#Coronavirusplays* initiative for distance learning via Webex platform, to analyze this literary phenomenon, problematize the experience of pandemic and lockdown and begin to process it from the perspective of behavioral coaching and discomfort management. So, in October-December 2020, I taught two distance learning courses, with synchronous lessons, recorded and then made available on the Moodle platform together with the teaching and support materials. Specifically, the courses in which I experimented and started to implement the project's line on teaching activities were: the course of Spanish Literature 1, for the Master degree students and the course of Catalan Language and Literature, for both Bachelor and Master degrees students. The response from students has been very positive and I have assigned a Bachelor degree and two Master degree thesis, which will consist of studying and translating into Italian a selection of microplays from *#Coronavirusplays* and, when it will be possible, to perform them with

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our University Theatre Group and other local theatre collectives. Interesting results have emerged from these initial experiences, which I will continue to analyze as the project develops.

As research is concerned, I am currently preparing a monograph that will contain the edition of the texts created from 13 March to 8 May 2020 following the launch of Jordi Casanovas' #Coronavirusplays initiative, which will be preceded by an introductory study aimed at identifying and deepening the key aspects of such texts, of the microtheatre subgenre and of the phenomenon of literarization of the pandemic experience.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Audience Involvement: The process of actively involving the Audience in the communication act, in order to increase their engagement with the message. Its aim is to inspire awareness (and dissent), stance and even action.

COVID-19 Pandemic: Pandemic of Coronavirus disease 2019, caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). It was identified in December 2019 in Wuhan, China. The WHO declared the outbreak of a public health emergency of international concern in January 2020 and a pandemic in March 2020.

ICT in Education: ICT enables the use of innovative educational resources and the renewal of learning methods, establishing a more active collaboration of students and the simultaneous acquisition of technological knowledge. ICT can complement, enrich, and transform education for the better.

Microtheatre: Small performances, in small spaces—not always intended for theatrical performance—frequently used for political purposes. Flexible format that allows the playwright bringing the audience closer to diverse themes, transmitting values, and achieving positioning.

Monologue: A speech given by a single character. It was traditionally a device used in theatre—a speech to be given on stage—, but in Postmodern aesthetics it refers also to other literary genres and artistic languages (film, etc.).

Political Theatricality: The sense of relations between rulers and ruled, originally (re)interpreted and re-expressed by theatre and performance. It expresses an ethos of theatricality which implies Politics, Society, Identity and Performative Arts.

Postdramatic Theatre: Performative aesthetic which no longer necessarily focuses on the dramatic text as the medium which leads theatre. Essentially it is a devised, non-literary, theatre/performance that is made collaboratively.