

Research Article

Online English Language Classes: Teacher -Student Relation In Indian Context

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Abstract

It is universally acknowledged that People accomplish, though arduous and laborious, for the loved ones. They perform better if the relation with whom they work and the environment they are in are pleasing and comfortable. Language learning is also exactly similar. In countries like

India where tradition is strictly followed accepting modernity and respecting culture having broadminded views, the good relationship makes better teachers and good learners. The sudden shift from regular classroom to online classes due to Covid-19 has brought basic challenges to the existing academic environment, and teacher-student mutual understanding and cardinal relation. The suitability of online classes for English language learning impacts on the much-needed relationship. The majority teaching methods and approaches primarily have been adopted keeping in mind only regular classroom though very few have been adopted keeping blended learning in mind. This paper tries to analyse the suitability of online classes to teach English language and its impact on the relationship between student and teacher in Indian.

Keywords: English Language, online learning, teacher-student relationship.

Ancient Indian Education System:

“Mathru Devobhava

Pitru Devobhava

Acharya Devobhava”

Meaning: Mother is equal to God, Father is equal to God and Teacher is equal to God.

This well known, frequently used, and always accepted ‘shloka’ confirms that a teacher’s place is next only to parents in India. Indian education system before the British ‘Gurukula’(Ashrama) cemented a strong bond between teacher and learner. The teacher was treated as parent and so he showered unconditional affection on the students. So, there was complete submission of students to teacher and in return teachers would treat students like their own children besides teaching everything achievable. Even though there is some difference between the words teacher and guru in meaning both can be treated as the same in the present-day context. The ancient Gurukula was a wonderful system which created good humans and very good citizens, the real strength of a nation. As Chouhan Says; “The success and the achievements of an educational system depend to a large extent on the ideas that animate the teacher and the student. The nature of the relationship that exists between the two and the type of life they lead. In ancient time the teacher and their student’s relation were mutual” (1) The goal of education was self realisation and selfless service. The education system of ancient India was unique in its structure. The rulers did not interfere in

designing curriculum and educational instructions because education was not at all a business in those days. They knew that education only would make man human and the existence of societal peace and harmony lies in education.

As it was residential the students had to stay with the teachers till completing education. The teacher would provide food, clothing and primary needs to students. The dignity of labour was what ancient Indian teachers emphasise. Constructive discussions and debates were encouraged. Personality development and possession of noble ideals were focused on. As the students' observation was practical, they would earn practical knowledge. The Vedas, the Upanishads, the Darshanas and parts of Vedangas; phonetics and grammar were taught. Though knowledge was conveyed orally, different methods of learning; memorization, critical analysis, storytelling, question and answer were rightly used. As the quality of education was unmatched students from different parts of the world joined Indian universities like Nalanda. A historian confirms "The University of Nalanda was the educational center of international moral comparable in the universalism of its thought, the wide range of its studies, the international character of its community to the greatest universities of modern time like Oxford, Cambridge, Paris and Harvard."

The decline of this well established and fertile education structure slowly declined with the incursion of Muslim reign. And the British could erase it by introducing their own new education.

English Education in India and the Quick Spread of English Language:

In 1835 Macauley's historical Minutes, with the approval of the then governor general, William Bentick, introduced English education system in India. The purpose, creating Indians in blood and English in mind spirit, reveals how narrowminded they were. It was introduced in India only for getting support for their reign in culturally strong India. Indian enlightened people welcomed it because they believed that education would enlighten Indians. With these moves English became the language of instruction. The British wanted to transmit their culture too through the education. In 1957 three universities at Madras, Calcutta and Bombay were established. They would become successful in breaking the very backbone of India, its culture and tradition and could rule Indians more than three hundred years.

Indian political leaders could not be free from psychological and education fetters of the British even after independence. We have been continuing the same structure in fact it has reached its worst. Reforms have been done for formality that too superficially. Police, law and order, economics, trade continued with the same basic structure and education also is not an exception. It is doubtless to say that the present education is not focusing on character development. It has become business in the hands of corporates; and so teachers, students and parents are becoming scapegoats in their schemes.

Globalisation has changed the status of English in the world spreading it as global language. Technological developments fixed English as an essential language for communication. Use of internet, international travel, growth of MNCs, free trade, exchange of military support, competition among countries in commerce, attempts to prove superiority in sports, cultural exchange, trials for proving academic, social and political notions make English spread rapidly. As a result it has become 'global language', 'international language' '*lingua franca*' of the world. Many readily agree with the view "English seems to have been adopted as the language of globalization these days as the language of global culture and international economy" (British Council). Some people view that because of political, economic and technological might linguistic imperialism has taken place. Some went to the extent of calling it a life skill. It is evident that majority of communication happens in English throughout the world. "Rapid changes have occurred in the users and in the ways of use of English in the past three decades. It has been estimated that more than two billion people speak English across the world" (Graddol, 2006;). It is understood that in the current year, more than two billion people worldwide, of 7.8 billion, speak English both natively and as a second language. So, from native speakers to non-native speakers, from the educated to the uneducated concern English as a language for a life and living. Though Teaching practices of English as a foreign language or second language are continuing for the most part, English has become a part of people's lives. It is unquestionable that no country in the world can ignore placing English in their curriculum and setting up environment to teach English for their people. As opined by an academician; "Nowadays, knowledge of English has become an essential part of everyday life of the global world. Many people are using English in nearly every sector and for international relations" (Ayman 20)

Role of English Teacher in India:

English teacher's role is the combination of many things. English Teacher provides many things besides language input, language related culture, multiculturalism, He is a facilitator primarily providing opportunity to learn for the students. He is also soft skills trainer, mock interviewer, trainer for public speaking and leadership, knowledge provider, guide for higher education, coach for competitive exams and many more. The recent times made him take up heavy responsibilities like training the students for their life skills. In a single sentence he is taking part in the nation building by playing burdensome multi roles.

English Teacher- Language Learner Relationship in the Indian Classroom:

Experts have recommended that English language learning needs enthusiastic and lively environment. So English teachers teach in a practical way keeping everyday life in mind. They create suitable environment understanding and analysing the mindset of the students. Highly seriousness, creating fear, being ready to punish the students for their mistakes don't yield good results. As English is interlinked with many other skills including employability skills, soft skills, leadership, self-awareness, public speaking, students are cordial with the English teachers. But one cannot ignore the reality that some of the learners always feel uncomfortable due to lack of confidence and other factors as their brought up was different involving socio cultural aspects. Though it's a challenge, involving different aspects other than language teaching, English teachers are trying hard to overcome this kind of situations. In India, when it comes to the students' liking of teachers' personality besides teaching skills, English teachers come in the first row. English teachers have an opportunity to use humour while teaching. It is confirmed by the following words; "the more laughing [there is in the classroom], the smaller the distance between the learners and the teacher" (Chabeli 55).

Suitability of Online Classes for English Language Teaching:

Different researches and studies have given various methods and approaches for teaching the four language skills, grammar and vocabulary etc. Researches have been going on exploring the possibilities for the better ones. All most all the current practices are advised keeping regular classes in mind. Now it's time to reassess and redesign approaches and methods keeping present situation in mind and anticipating future days.

Teaching Grammar: Grammatical rules are basics to any language. Learners feel monotonous to learn grammar. So special focus should be there to teach grammar. A researcher from Srilanka, a neighbouring country of India, reveals, “It was revealed that teachers like to teach grammar and students like to learn it. Both parties are aware of the importance of having a sound knowledge of grammar for language development. However, students feel that learning grammar in isolation is boring. Nevertheless, they are reluctant to do away with grammar lessons” (Navaz & Sama 653). Teachers feel classroom is quite comfortable to teach grammar using board and check. Rules, examples and explanations are done in classroom. They give exercises while or after teaching and after that teachers explain the answers. To teach grammar online, teachers can use share screen taking current day newspaper or any text from pdf or websites. Even for exercises, besides giving the oral or written exercises using cohort like exercises improve competitive spirit of the learners. Motion pictures, animated sentences make the students exciting. To teach grammar online classes are easier but the only difficulty is getting the attention of the students initially.

Teaching LSRW skills in the classroom is difficult so that for listening and speaking English lab has been introduced and those are quite useful for teaching those two skills. With the online classes teachers feel comfort to teach some topics and discomfort in other topics.

Teaching Listening skills: It is a known fact that of the four language skills people spend most of the time in listening. All the teaching listening methods are good in labs or in the some class rooms where audio video visuals are used. With the online classes it has become easier except creating attitude to listen as in listening, trust, attitude etc are involved.

To teach recognition of connected speech, subskill of listening, labs are comfortable but online classes are more resourceful because vast readily available sources can be played besides teacher’s own explanation. To teach understanding gist, another subskill, both labs and online classes are similar. If the teacher spends time, he can choose different video or audio or movie clip to develop this subskill. Listening for attitude and interpreting spoken text also can be done more effectively in online classes than regular classes as it can be taught using available speeches, movies or audio and videoclips. In teaching note taking both usual classes and online classes are similar but assessment online is difficult to some extent.

Teaching Speaking skills: Of the two productive skills speaking is given more priority because in most of the informal and formal situations spoken communication takes place. A person's communication ability is estimated primarily based on his speaking skills. Learners are focusing on improving spoken communication. Rivers opines "Speaking does not of itself constitute communication unless what is said is comprehended by another person. Teaching the comprehension of spoken speech is therefore a primary importance of the communication aim is to be reached"(196). In teaching speaking skills vowel and consonant sounds, stress and correct pronunciation are taught carefully. To teach these, online classes online dictionary and some apps can be used more comfortably. as Another important subskill intonation, rising falling tones, can be taught by playing the audio of native speakers' speeches or movies produced by English speaking countries. In lab or in classroom, resources for these subskills are very limited. So, one can probably say that for teaching speaking skills online classes provide good resources.

Teaching Reading skills: Though reading habits of the people have decreased drastically, reading is still one of the major sources of getting information and knowledge. The words of Francis Bacon 'Reading maketh a full man' is quite suitable to the present day also.

The subskills of reading, scanning, skimming and extensive reading can be taught online by sharing readily available text. For teaching this, students need not have textbook or any reading material. Teachers can use research articles, articles in magazines, text from some websites, daily news paper can used as authentic material for teaching reading skills. Students can feel exciting when different text are being used.

Teaching Writing Skills: A researcher rightly says "As writing is a skill that is acquired by constant practice, the teachers should always motivate the ELLs by introducing the topics by adopting new techniques, methods and approaches in the teaching of writing skills" (Rao PS 201)

Online classes are comfortable to teach paragraph writing, essay writing, letter writing, story writing etc. The Subskills of writing organizing information and editing skills definitely need giving as many model texts as possible. Instead of suggesting some websites, a teacher can show the best texts as examples for organizing information in a sequential order and editing it.

Assessment: “ A good teacher is a person who assesses the needs and possibilities of a situation and creates and uses practices that have promise for that situation”.(Zahoric 22). Online language teaching is much more comfortable than the usual classes to English teacher when they meticulously understand using the available features of the platform they use. But the most difficult one is assessing the students after completing the topics online unlike regular classes where all the four language skills can be assessed well in face to face.

Actual Problems: It is understandable that internet connection is the biggest problem both to the teachers and students. As the teachers are not in a position to observe all the students while teaching, they cannot get how the teaching is going on. Initially getting the attention of the students is a principal problem and maintaining the same till the end is another major problem in teaching English language.

Relation between Teacher and Student in Online Classes: Some of the teachers complain that as there is no physical presence of the students, online classes are like dealing with machines. As there is no physical presence of teachers, some of the learners feel that there is not enough motivation. The reason for this feel is that students and teacher are tuned for regular classes and the presence of both is the source of motivation to learn for both and when they don't feel the presence that works like a hindrance of teaching and learning.

Mutual understanding among the people makes good family member, good neighbors, good team members, effective employees, inspirational leaders, strong societies and mighty nations. Mutual understanding and reciprocal attitude undoubtedly make teachers and learners achieve their goals. It is the responsibility of every academician, researcher, teacher and student to comprehend and work towards this objective to transform the world into a harmonious planet for people to live in with utmost peace and happiness.

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