CHALLENGES OF TEACHING LANGAUGE AND LITERATURE ONLINE DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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ABSTRACT:

This paper deals with the challenges of teaching literature or language online during this COVID 19 pandemic. In the following paper, it can be observed that there are few problems associated with online teachings such as digital and data divide, technical illiteracy, impersonal teaching, and outdated pedagogical practices.

In this paper, certain suggestions are made on how to make online learning free from deficiency by improving and improvising internet facility, pedagogy, and training teachers and students in accessing virtual classrooms. Literature and language form one of the bases of society and teaching and learning them in a virtual platform poses a huge challenge to teachers and students

The students are slowly losing their interest and seem to have no motivation to attend any classes online and some students who want to attend they do not have the necessary facility to have access to online classes. This kind of challenge not only disrupts the Indian education system but also challenges it to develop and adopt new technology with changing time.

ARTICLE

Teaching and learning literature in this pandemic situation would in a way soothe and emotionally balances an individual in distress. Drama and poetry act as curative art, especially poetry has been considered to have a modern therapeutic use. So teaching as well as learning literature could help in managing stress during this time of pandemic. It is a form of Bibliotherapy. Literary care giving becomes extremely significant for social wellbeing and a way of connecting each other during this time of social distancing. But as a country and group of teachers and students, we have got accustomed to the old and comfortable chalk and talk method. Moving away from this to adopting a new advanced technique of virtual classrooms becomes the first challenge.

The second challenge is the selection of a proper platform for teaching and learning and how to use it effectively. These kinds of e-learning and online webinars were not that rare for the science and technology field but humanities and especially for literature students and teachers it came as a pandemonium. The pandemic did thump their learning by limiting their access to their classrooms and learning group. To continue their learning they had to search for an unconventional platform and everyone started to attend Webinars and interactions. Google classrooms, Zoom, Skype, Microsoft teams, Web room, Cisco, WebEx, Edmodo would be some of the platforms. These would facilitate the teacher and students to interact including virtual whiteboard and recording of the session is on hand too. This would assist the teacher as well as students to go back and reflect on the session, here teachers require to buildup robust pedagogy as both teachers and students suffer from digital illiteracy.

To teach a subject like literature which is so close to reality in a virtual world is quite intricate. In India online classes are unpopular and outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic not only closed universities, colleges, and schools but rather opened doors for virtual online teaching and learning. This provides an opportunity for students to take up new courses from anywhere in the world but It also saves a lot of other resources like time. Online teaching affects a literature and language student drastically. A language or a literature student always needs a physical platform to express his opinion and present them in front of the whole class it builds up their confidence but when one starts to present in a virtual set up the participation and presentation experience gets limited.

Students coming from villages or towns or even in cities do not have access to unlimited data or proper technology or tools to attend these virtual classes, what can be done for these students still exists as a question. Recently in Kerala's Malappuram district a ninth standard girl Devika Balakrishnan set herself on fire just because she had no Smartphone or a laptop and that she had missed an online class. This is the mindset of youngsters. They are growing fragile and desperate.

This is a virtual era undoubtedly but virtual classrooms cannot replace the offline classrooms which give one-on-one experience and no matter how big a class is each student gets to make a point in their class. But in a virtual classroom the sessions become extremely impersonal not everyone gets to interact with the resource person.

Another challenge is to keep literature students motivated and entertained while conducting classes. In offline classes the teacher could ask the students to role-play and enact certain plays. But in virtual classrooms, it is not possible anymore. It becomes extremely difficult to control the students and to keep their attention intact. A teacher would not know whether the student is listening to their class or doing something else, especially while taking an online test the teacher won't be able to know if the student is cheating with this kind of hiccups down the lane how will a teacher be able to track a particular student's progression?. While taking online classes for literature or language class creative and reflective evaluation is not possible. Because of this, it becomes crucial for teachers to develop different kinds of examinations and on how to assess students reading listening to speaking and writing skills. And most importantly how can these examinations or courses are given any accreditation?

The process can be quite upsetting when the internet fails; the classroom hours may reduce as well as they may diminish the discipline in which students study. It may degrade a student's speech, thinking, and research skills. In physical classrooms students either come from their interest or by force but they are present physically but in virtual you cannot assure that they are present in the session.

In third world country where students are expected to be taught a different language such as English in their native language, one can understand the difficulty that falls on those students to adapt to this new method of teaching. It is not that a small group of students are suffering this but it is evident that major chunk of the student community does not want to spend their data on webinars organized by their academicians they would prefer to

spend them on something else. To keep up the attention of a student during online classes according to me would be one of the greatest challenges for an ELT (English Language Teaching) teacher.

 One of the main challenges is to know that students are unable to have access to the various apps and gadgets. The Government should take responsibility to provide free platform for both students and teachers to interact without any data divide. For example, internet services are very expensive and data required for any online class is huge. Because of Covid-19 pandemic students are not allowed on premises of the university or college during this time this makes students unable to have access to free and stable Wi-Fi. Moreover in rural part of India internet connectivity signal is appalling.

Another challenge is that the online sessions become emotionless delivery, most of the time during the presentation only the face and torso of resource person are visible. Because of this the teacher becomes a talking head, the students are muted off and engaging the classes and interaction between the teachers and students become monotonous.

Online classes do not ensure the personality development of students, the caliber of a teacher cannot be assessed just by listening to the teacher. A student must get to know a teacher, it is well known that a teacher influences a student and without the influence of teacher, student cannot go-ahead or learns anything. Here reorienting the teaching methods and curriculum becomes important.

A new problem is that the teacher starts to lose their teaching skills since they are online that is they are behind a system and one cannot guarantee whether the teacher is looking or not at the book and engaging class. The quality of teaching gets deteriorated. During online classes when students are taking up a course they would want a teacher who is competent and qualified in teaching the subject but it becomes extremely difficult to assess a teacher online, because one unaware of the qualities of an online teacher.

What about normal people's knowledge won't spread to others? Students can have access to some gadgets and can interact with individuals of their field but what about motivated people who have an interest in the literature they would not have any access to webinars or internet. One has to address nation's social and economic backgrounds wherein one group has more freedom and access to resource and the other group waits to get a piece of anything it can get.

It is quite clear that once COVID 19 lockdown gets over things will be different students and teachers will go back to the traditional way of teaching and learning but they will also make use of online platforms. In this context the Indian education system needs to develop a robust pedagogy to meet the interests and requirement of both students and teachers.

E- Laboratories are to be introduced to facilitate both teachers and students. New teachers should be given training on teaching online. Students should be provided proper guidelines on how to have access to the internet and online courses. Importantly Learner-centered teaching should be promoted as to meet the interest of the student. No doubt teaching online will become a new norm, one should give importance and time for transitioning from in-person classes to online classes. There is no evidence to show that online education improves the quality of higher education but there are high chances of bringing more danger by only virtual classes. By restricting students to stay home without any access to libraries and proper research work and making them completely dependent on online virtual classes will ruin their future.