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English Language Teaching to Young Learners in the Socially Distanced Classroom: A Critical **Review**

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> Abstract --- It is understood by the academic communities that they take responsibility for their online learning with the help of the necessary technical equipment during the lockdown times, and manage their schedules. They have no choice but to find a solution to their problems on their own when their classmates and their language teachers are around. As the detention is partially lifted in some places, young students are starting to attend their language classes. In a way, they are released from the sense of isolation they felt at home during this time of Lockdown that was coming to an end. But things have changed. Now they find the common space of the classroom again, but in the socially distant classroom and also referred by some as a virtual classroom. This is a challenging time for an English teacher too. The communicative classroom has changed. How it would be possible to regain the enthusiasm of students who work together and share broad and meaningful interaction? Group discussions and pair work can be very difficult, and young students may need to find new ways to combine these activities.

Keywords---artificial intelligence, communicative language teaching, humanistic approach, language tools, online teaching.

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Introduction

The rise of the internet began to affect the social and academic world in the 1990s, where English teachers had a difficult relationship with technology. Initially, English teachers were slow to adopt digital teaching and learning methods due to their academic background. It shows that many English teachers feel they are incompetent when it comes to using technology in the classroom (Clark, 2018). In fact, many English teachers are reluctant to update and embrace the digital wave that has radically changed other areas of our lives. Obviously, there are a number of concerns English teachers have about the use of technology in the classroom. There are some identified concerns about technology interventions in the ELT classroom, such as: It is also the view of many academics, particularly the ELT that the advent of technology, particularly Artificial Intelligence (AI), will soon establish the truth that "teachers are being fired". According to Ribeiro (2020), teacher guidance and Creativity, along with artificial intelligence tools, is an effective way to stimulate students' development as they learn their language. This article will address the fears and allow the English teaching (ELT) approaches that are prevalent in the socially distant classroom (Bailey & Card, 2009; Martin et al., 2019).

Research questions

The purpose of the research was to find the answers to the following questions:

- Is technology truly isolating the teachers and their role in socially distanced classroom?
- Are English Language teachers facing the threat of being deskilled?
- Is technology truly isolating the teachers and their role in socially distanced classroom?

As Flinder (1988), mentions in his definition of teacher isolation, there are two different but useful orientations. The first is based on the isolation of the teacher as the conditions under which the teacher works. This should be understood by looking at the characteristics of the teacher's workplace and the possibilities or scarcity of opportunities the teacher has to talk to colleagues. The second orientation describes teacher isolation as a psychological factor rather than a physical condition in the workplace. This situation locates the workplace within the individual, since it is "constantly being created and recreated by filtering and processing information". In other words, teacher isolation depends more on "how teachers perceive and experience peer interaction than on the absolute extent of the interaction in which they are involved" (Hedberg, 1981).

In most situations, the technology doesn't continually isolate or facilitate the conversation. English teachers should assess for themselves how many of them are now using their smartphones, especially social media such as Facebook or WhatsApp, to communicate for school purposes. This can very much apply to their interaction in a virtual learning environment. When these platforms are used properly, there are many opportunities for language teachers and even students will be able to communicate a lot with their peers. And whether we like it or not, these communication platforms, which are intervened through digital channels,

enable a high percentage of interpersonal communication in the virtual environment today (Bartlett II, 2007; Harper, 1987).

Are English Language teachers facing the threat of being deskilled?

The teaching of the English language has long been considered a changing discipline in which teachers are primarily conveyors of confirmatory knowledge, i.e. information or facts. Middleton (2016), quotes that 'teaching and learning with smartphones and tablets in post-compulsory education'. Recently, language teachers have become better learning guides, providing learning opportunities for their students and also providing feedback to ensure their improvement. Hence, the guiding principle of teaching is not strictly focused on anything, but in a dynamic way that adapts to the context and situation in which each teacher finds himself in educational involvement and professional engagement. Enabling learning through technology is a highly skilled endeavor, and in many ways these contexts provide truly functional support for teaching. They even give students the opportunity to learn in innovative and interesting ways (Woods & Çakır, 2011; Hadadi et al., 2014).

Do teachers lose some of the skills they have learned in these contexts? The answer to this question can be subjective in many ways, but the fulfillment of these conditions is certainly different from the need for skillful action on the part of language teachers in one way or another. Recommended that there is need to address the challenges of teachers that are faced in online English languageteaching during the pandemic. The penetration of technology may require new skills from teachers related to the operational needs in the classroom, but the fact is that certain skills to encourage / motivate students to traditional language learning practices are not appropriate in the new context. There is a lot of scope for teachers to lose their skills in the process, and at the same time it needs to be understood that teachers are qualified enough to meet new challenges with newly acquired skills (Boden, 1998; Bench-Capon, & Dunne, 2007).

The impact of Artificial Intelligence on ELT classroom

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is one of the most impacting invention in many areas. Converting speech into text and vice versa, helping in some Mathematical calculations and so on are the few advantages of AI. Leveraging AI to enhance education and learning' (UNESCO, 2019), Researchers have proven that AI is highly impacting the education system due to its advantages. Tuomi (2018), stated the following:

AI may reduce the importance of some human cognitive capabilities, or makethem obsolete. For example, as AI can convert speech to text and vice versa, dyslexiamay become socially less important than it has been in the past. AI may have clear benefits for individuals, theoverall impact is not easy to predict. For example, computers may support people inadding and multiplying numbers; if they became reliant on computational machines, itmay, however, become more difficult to develop more advanced mathematical skills thatrequire mental arithmetic and number skills. From a pedagogic point of view, it maysometimes be more beneficial to use AI to help people to develop competences that allowthem to overcome difficulties in reading and counting, instead of using AI to makeredundant skills that underpin important cognitive capabilities.

Artificial intelligence has become a buzzword and pursues many professions in its own way. However, a study in which jobs are likely to be replaced by AI in the future Frey & Osborne (2013), found that the probability of the teaching profession disappearing is very low at around 0.007, i.e. without a doubt very low. Especially when compared to jobs like library assistant (0.95), real estate agent (0.97), and telemarketing (0.99). The role of a teacher is always complex and requires a variety of skills including subject knowledge, class management, counseling, feedback, learning differentiation, emotional intelligence, motivational skills, problem solving., etc. - the list continues with the missing ones. Sharma (2018), stated that a teacher has a no. of Maintain tasks in addition to previous roleat the pace of change and changing technologies learning environments (Kacprzyk & Zadrożny, 2005; Borghi et al., 2019).

This is where language teaching differs from the current state of Artificial Intelligence, which can be described as "domain-specific". What AI offers is highly qualified, but in a specific area. According to Kessler (2018), today's language teachers are faced with so many exciting ways to use technology to improve language learning and the response id overwhelming. This is evident in the young learners' attempt of learning many things, like driving a car, playing chess, recognizing human voices or face recognition, etc. The ability to "general mastery" of a master along with the complex interaction or combination between "general" and "specific" will never be achieved by machines in the immediate vicinity. The socially distant classroom or online classroom offers English teachers the opportunity to reorganize their teaching strategies to improve students' language skills that are easier to practice at home as well as those they couldn't practice at home as easily as those 'Activity of speaking'. The use of AI tools for speaking is rapidly increasing to improve speaking skill of the learner (Zou et al., 2020).

The invaluable role of approaches and tools

In this digital age, it has become convenient as a teacher to work remotely. Teaching English or teaching in socially remote settings is seen as beneficial for many teachers as they found the option of flexible hours, interactive social media platforms discussions with students, and the ability to teach more students at the same time. It was seen as essential to have well-organized teaching material in order to be an effective teacher in the virtual or socially distant classroom. Diyanti (2016), found solutions to five main problems in selecting appropriate material for teaching English to young learners. The teacher can select data sources online, but there are some challenges that need to be carefully addressed before preparing for the class. Well, the challenges may not only relate to finding the right material for the class, but also approaches to delivering it effectively in the classroom. The main concerns of the teacher are always the following (Mufaridah, 2021; Erbas et al., 2021).

Upholding the attention of the students

There is no way to monitor or supervise anyone when students open the screen of their laptop or cell phone to attend class, this can result in them being distracted and distracted in this situation by the windows that are already open or inadvertently. However, this problems can be addressed with the help of certain new apps or latest tools that detect inattentive students. Some of the online educational applications that provide this capability include Cisco WebEx. Visualization tools support the teacher to observe students' behavior and detection of level of involvement in the activities (France et al., 2006).

Utilizing video chat mode

Since students are already familiar with Facebook live chat or WhatsApp video chat, they don't worry too much about using this mode while listening to the lesson. On WhatsApp English language class can be more interactiveboth in visual and verbal (Nuraeni & Nurmalia, 2020). A case study of zoom app Use by a Secondary ESL Teacher in Hong Kong conducted by Cheung (2021), reviled that the integration of zoom in English language online classrooms provides opportunities to develop language skills. In addition to that, many other Apps are available. Some schools in India use the Zoom app while others rely on Microsoft Teams or the Cisco Webex app to deliver their courses online. Skype and Google Hangouts (both free and unlimited) are also used, but most of the popular apps have premium plans that work well and have great features for online content delivery (Ginaya et al., 2018; Kumar et al., 2016).

The advantages of humanistic approach and communicative language teaching

Any approach to the classroom (online or offline) is a way of looking at teaching and learning. First of all, any approach to language teaching is a theoretical consideration of what language is about and how it can be learned. One approach paves the way for methods of teaching and the use of classroom activities or techniques that will help students achieve their goals. The following tables provide information on two major approaches that have recently been considered by English teachers (Amori, 2021; Suryasa, 2019).

Table 1
The humanistic approach to English language teaching

| Humanistic Approaches | | | |
|---|---|--|--|
| The Silent Way | Student interaction rather than teacher | Teacher is silent to allow student awareness of how English works | |
| Suggestopedia | Meaningful texts and vocabulary | Relaxed atmosphere, with music; encourages subliminal learning of English | |
| Community Language Learning | Student interaction | Understanding of English through active student interaction | |
| Comprehension Approach (Natural Approach, the Learnables, and Total Physical Response) | Listening comprehension | English speaking delayed until students are ready; meaning clarified through actions and visuals | |

Table 2
The communicative language teaching approach in teaching English

| Communicative Language Teaching | Interaction, authentic communication and | Understanding of English through active student interaction; role play, |
|------------------------------------|--|---|
| reacting | negotiating meaning | games, information gaps |
| Content-based, Task- | What is being | Content based on relevance to |
| based, and Participatory | communicated, not | students' lives: topics, tasks, |
| Approaches | structure of English | problem-solving |
| Learning Strategy Training, | | Teach learning strategies, |
| Cooperative Learning, and | How to learn | cooperation; activities vary according |
| Multiple Intelligences | | to different intelligences |

Source: Taylor, 2009

These modernapproaches are really helping the English Language teachers in their attempt to enhance the language skills of their students. But to what extent these approaches are instrumental when they are carried out in the online classroom or socially distanced classroom is what to be focused by every language teacher in current scenario. In a way, the teachers are overtly equipped with the online sources, such as digital platforms and language learning applications (apps). However, the cause of worry to teachers is due to their availability for longer periods. As some of these sources are available for premium subscribers, the limitations of such may cause disruption during the classroom activity, the teachers have to be more cautious about the kind of sources, material they are relying on achieving their targets.

Some advantageous online tools and apps to teach English

In the recent times the language learners are no way in need of someone to help them on the available tools and apps to learn the language. Though their usage of smartphones provides them an opportunity to explore few on their own, it is better the English Language teacher provides more information on useful tools and apps for learning the language. Some useful apps are picked up for this study and they are mentioned below. BaiBoard is a really great collaborative virtual whiteboard app for holding group meetings and can accommodate more participants at the same time. It also allows for browser sharing so students can participate from anywhere. The well-known Google Docs is another one that is very easy to work with online and easy to share. Here, too, several participants can work on the same document at the same time. It's also free for unlimited use from Google Inc. Groupboard is another with functions similar to Idroo and BaiBoard, but with limited key functions. Scribblar is also an online collaboration tool best used for online tutoring (Thompson, 2018). It offers live audio, chat, whiteboard, picture sharing, document sharing, and much more. Screen recording is a very useful tool for online teaching. Some other examples of screen recording tools are Camtasia and Screencast-o-Matic. Both are very easy to use and allow you to record your screen. If language teachers want to record sessions for the benefit of the students or the assessment, "Screencast-o-Matic" is ideal for online teaching. WizIQ is a complete online learning platform for live online courses. It has a connected virtual classroom application and can also be integrated into learning management systems (LMS) such as Blackboard and Moodle Content creation apps for online English teaching

The bookmaker helps language learners read and write their own stories. You can combine text, images, audio, books of poetry, scientific report manuals, journals, and much more. Later on, students can even publish their own texts. "Book Creator" is a very easy to use creation tool. Explain everything is another interactive and projection tool. Students can use this app to create a presentation and record everything they draw and say. They also have a nice red pointer that you can use while drawing. These two applications can also be considered for teaching English in online mode. Storybird is a powerful application that helps write, read, and tell stories in academic settings. It enables language learners of all ages to feel like real writers. It's a creative tool and can be used to improve study plans and assignments. It also has a feature like "FlashFiction" that helps students write their own stories. Padlet is also a very popular application in academic circles and is used for online learning. It is used by both teachers and students. Padlet helps ESL leaners to enhance writing skills (Marzuki, 2020). "Padlet" encourages both students and teachers to share their work. It is very easy to use and practical in class. Zoom is a very popular software that is widely used today for business and educational purposes. It is an application that is mainly used for hosting webinars. Even students can create content and host webinars with the simple user interface.

Kidblog is a blog environment that provides student writing tools and is now integrated with Microsoft Immersive Reader. Language teachers can monitor the student blog within the Student Authors community. This is where the students write their blog posts that will be published. Students write with the goal of having a real audience. It can also be useful for teaching English in socially distant classrooms. ComicLife is a more popular app that students use to read comics (Thacker, 2016). With this app, language teachers can bring comics into the classroom. Packed with balloons, captions, fonts, templates, and letter graphics, this app is an easy-to-use app that makes creating comics easier than ever. Speaker is a podcast application that gives students the ability to record a new podcast episode themselves. It would be nice if the students recorded their own podcasts in a very creative way. "Speaker" can also be used to teach languages in online mode.

Wasabi is an app with student-centered features and media-rich learning aids for students of all categories. This allows both students and teachers to work on pictures and video compositions as part of their joint projects. Edpuzzle is a great booster for teachers as they can check student progress. It has a custom video editing feature to delight students with interactive tools. Edx is also a popular and beneficial tool for online courses. This tool offers course content from several major universities around the world, such as Harvard and MIT. This application provides useful content for both teachers and students. Formative is an amazing creative assignment app that helps students in many ways, from writing assignments to evaluating. Language learners can create their own assignments and search for live results (Middleton, 2015; Pedro et al., 2019).

Conclusion

The presence of technology is inevitable. This is a digital world and advances in technology have changed the lives of almost everyone. Younger students adapt to these changes more than anyone else. Traditional approaches and methods of language teaching are also changing rapidly. Everything goes digital for your own benefit. Educational institutions also regard the technological adaptation due to the Covid-19 situation as a successful step. Accepting new forms of technological intervention increases curiosity and leads to a better understanding of teaching and learning. This article mentioned some of the digital tools available that are best for teaching in socially distant classrooms (Al-Magtri, 2014; Mahyoob, 2020).

Learnercan think that technology is a great friend in the academic world at the moment, and by sticking to new and effective digital modes in the classroom, you can make teaching more engaging and communicative. As young language learners return to class in online mode, teachers try to explore new ways to recreate the dynamics of family teaching in their entirely new and socially distant classroom. The purpose is to do whatever it takes to help students understand the content, increase their self-confidence and ensure that learning in the socially distant classroom through the online mode takes place without compromising the safety of both the teacher and the teacher affect. By making the few necessary adjustments here and there, English teachers can make their lessons even more fascinating as language learning activities are always meant to be fun and fascinating. Even though we may not get it right the first time, we tell our students, but practice makes perfect. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe rightly says that "Those who don't know foreign languages don't know anything about themselves".

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