

Virtual English Classes: Challenges, Realities, and Opportunities

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Abstract—A new scenario has been witnessed by education sector during the pandemic. The teaching and learning methods have been drastically changed for adults. Online mode has become the inevitable process in education sector in India due to COVID-19. Most of the English teachers adopted the same traditional method to teach English language classes online wherein the desired outcome is not achieved. The purpose of the study is to understand the learners' perspective towards virtual English language classes, and to understand the reality of virtual English classes. The research was conducted for BBA students at Koshys Institute of Management Studies, Bangalore, India by using Google Forms as a questionnaire which had 10 open-ended questions and the participants were hundred in number. The respondents opened up by expressing their experience and effectiveness on virtual English classes. The results indicated a high rate of dissatisfaction among the learners and a need for effectiveness in the teaching and learning process. In accordance, relevant measures are outlined for the teachers of virtual English classes to succeed wherein the learners can get benefitted beyond the barriers.

Index Terms—Online-mode, Traditional method, English language, Tertiary level

I. INTRODUCTION

A lot of responsibilities and challenges are posed on the modern teachers in the present era. A drastical change has occurred in the tradition of English teaching and learning due to the advent of technology. The reason for the development in social and linguistic change is technology (Shyamlee and Phil, 2021). The teachers teaching in the present era are facing various issues when it comes to the teaching process. The benefit of conducting online classes in the educational institutions such as primary schools and colleges is

still uncertain. In order to help students in overcoming the hurdles, teachers are in a compulsion to assist their students to hone the 21st century skills.

The policies issued for lockdown and quarantine have a huge impact on schools and universities wherein education sector has been adversely affected due to the spread of COVID-19 caused by the Corona virus along with social and economic life. As a result of the technological advancements in computer hardware, software, telecommunication systems and mobile computing, the traditional face-to-face classroom environment has been substituted (Danesh et al., 2015). Language classes have a huge impact due to the advent of the internet wherein the learners get ample opportunities to interact in the foreign language which wasn't possible prior to the coming of the internet (Salbego and Tumolo, 2015).

The mechanism of teaching has been drastically changed at tertiary level education as a result of teaching online and led to complications for teaching fraternity. The inevitable mode of teaching and learning in education sector across the world is virtual method because of COVID-19. The virtual mode's disadvantages are not deliberated widely whereas much importance is being given on its aids. A study conducted by Barkand (2017) found that online learning platforms demand various skills and knowledge because of which there's no significant difference in students' academic achievements in utilizing online platforms. Therefore, the obstacles and challenges faced by the students' fraternity has not been discussed widely. The present research focuses to achieve the following objectives: 1. To explore the difficulties existed in virtual language learning 2. To understand the notion of English language learners on

virtual English language sessions³. To prescribe some of the suggestions on its research findings.

II. METHODOLOGY

This present study focuses on students' perception towards virtual English language teaching and learning and the effectiveness of virtual language classes. The study uses qualitative method. An online research questionnaire was created using Google Forms to collect data from the target respondents, consisting of English language learners (ESL) at the tertiary level, and was distributed to the selected students via email and WhatsApp groups. The questionnaire contained questions related to their English language virtual language. The questionnaire consists of ten questions, and all of them are closed-ended. The questionnaire focused on traditional method of language learning, human interactions, peer discussion in person, self-discipline, excuses to bunk classes, motivational factors affecting the learning process, self-control, time management, social discussion and interactions. In the ten closed ended questions, a 5-point Likert Scale is used for the measurement ranging from 1 as 'strongly disagree', 2 as 'disagree', 3 as 'neither agree nor disagree' 4 as 'agree' to 5 as 'strongly agree'.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings from the students' questionnaire are presented in Table 2. In Q1, most respondents (Agree = 58%, Strongly Agree = 21%) indicated that a physical classroom setup helps them improve their understanding of lessons. Although some students chose Strongly Disagree, Disagree, or Neither Agree nor Disagree regarding whether a physical classroom setup motivates them to learn, the combined 79% for Agree and Strongly Agree suggests a positive response. The significant gap between agreement and disagreement options highlights students' negative attitudes toward online platforms for learning English. For Q2, a majority of students (Agree = 51%, Strongly Agree = 14%) believed that online language classes often lead to boredom, while the remaining 35% disagreed. The data suggest that students perceive online classes as causing boredom. In Q3, a high percentage of students selected Agree (57%) and Strongly Agree (29%), indicating that physical

classrooms provide more human interaction, while only 14% disagreed. The majority agreed that physical classrooms facilitate communication between teachers and students. Q4 results showed that 72% of respondents (Agree = 54%, Strongly Agree = 18%) considered online study a great approach. However, the findings also suggest that online learning becomes complicated if students lack self-discipline. In Q5, most respondents (Agree = 41%, Strongly Agree = 13%) felt that online learning platforms provide ample excuses to postpone language sessions. The majority acknowledged that online classes offer numerous opportunities to delay or skip sessions. For Q6, most students (67%) agreed (Agree = 59%, Strongly Agree = 8%) that online classes can cause delays if one lacks motivation and self-control. The results indicate that without motivation, students may end up not studying at all. In Q7, a majority (Agree = 57%, Strongly Agree = 21%) emphasized the importance of time management, impulse control, motivation, self-direction, and discipline for successful online learning. Q8 revealed that 57% of respondents agreed that eliminating distractions in an online classroom is nearly impossible unless one has mastered self-control. In Q9, a significant 89% of participants (Agree = 55%, Strongly Agree = 34%) believed that language learning requires interaction with others. Finally, Q10 showed that 79% of students (Agree = 55%, Strongly Agree = 24%) supported the idea that traditional language learning systems provide interactive sessions.

The results of this study align with previous research. Yusny et al. (2021) found that students perceive face-to-face interaction as an essential part of the learning process. Similarly, Saminathan (2021) stated that students tend to lose motivation when they encounter challenges in online classes. According to Gorbunovs et al. (2016), self-discipline plays a crucial role in achieving desired outcomes in e-learning. Additionally, Tu and McIsaac (2002) highlighted that social interactions significantly influence the effectiveness of online learning environments.

It's believed that face-to-face in the target language with peers and tutors boost their language learning. Language learners' ability to communicate gets substantially impaired with the absence of interaction and language use (Saeed et al., 2016). A lack of proper face-to-face interactive classroom meetings is one of the major disadvantages for students and educators

(Guy Posey et al., 2010). The change could not be avoided: moving from the conventional in-person form of learning to online learning and teaching was a direct consequence of COVID-19 (Hastuti et al., 2021). Nevertheless, the greater number of respondents considered such a switching was a disadvantage, blaming ineffective lectures and the failure to use appropriate instructional strategies tailored to the needs of the students to circulate amongst as reasons. Patcher and Maier (2010) found that Australian students preferred face-to-face teaching interactions, allowing students to exchange ideas and skills. Virtual language classes meet great challenges due to sporadic internet connections and minimal data access that hamper student-to-student interaction in exchanging ideas and writing skills (Rasyad et al., 2020).

Most respondents maintained that they find it easier to learn in standard classrooms and feel more comfortable with in-person instruction. Orton-Johnson (2009) reports that, in the UK, students have been resistant to the adoption of online learning materials, primarily favouring face-to-face instruction. This attests to the fact that a good understanding of online platforms is a prerequisite for joining classrooms based on such technology.

A further question examines attitudes toward active participation in online learning, particularly concerning the development of speaking, writing, and thinking skills in the target language. The online classes help students become better at speaking, but they remained uncertain as to what degree it helps students improve their writing skills. Several technological disturbances, like official bugs, screen hang-ups, visibility and audibility issues, an inadequate technical skill set, poor preparation, and unfamiliarity with learning software, make a perfect barrier for online learning (Shrivastava et al., 2021).

IV. CONCLUSION

The present study examines students' perceptions and experiences about online English language learning, with specific reference to Indian students. The study highlighted the commonness, differences, pros, and cons of virtual language learning. The educational sector underwent a radical change by employing several digital tools to facilitate teaching and learning at different levels, especially in the wake of the

pandemic. The findings give full coverage of virtual English language learning, which indicates that students think physical classes provide them with wider exposure to both the language and the subject matter, while online learning has to deal with interference from families and friends, unstable network connection, less attention, lack of motivation and engagement, and reduced social interfacing with teachers and peers. There is uncertainty regarding the satisfaction of students with respect to online classes. The study also validated that its numerous limitations render online English language learning to be undesirable and disappointing. The results are indicative that face-to-face interaction and the needed help from the teachers have great potency to affect the students academically positive. The findings portray that students prefer traditional classroom settings to nurture their language. In conclusion, the study underscores that the denotation of effective pedagogical strategies, choice of a proper learning management system, and technological readiness may greatly enhance students' performance in their own academic endeavours in virtual learning spaces.

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