World Studies Extended Essay

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Research Question

To what extent has technology impacted acquired English Language Fluency in rural India?

Introduction

India is one of the most populated countries in the world. Home to over 700 different languages and dialects and ranking the fourth most multilingual country in the world, India has the second-largest English-speaking community in the world. Though Hindi is the national language, English clearly has emerged the official language for most government and business transactions. Hence most Indians are at least bilingual, if not multilingual.

With an embedded culture of multilingualism, Indians are exposed to multiple languages, right from their schooling years. Primary education in most schools' mandates inclusion of two to three languages including English. English is usually the language of instruction, followed by a second language, usually either Hindi or regional language, followed by the other option as a third language.

A child's language spectrum is not just limited to the languages studied at school. They may have exposure to another language- their mother-tongue.

Due to such a huge plethora of languages that a child is exposed to, they tend to have differing fluencies. The same holds true with their level of vocabulary. For example, an article published by the British Council in the English Impact report 2013, states that a child exposed to Hindi, Bengali and English at an early age might display smaller vocabularies in each of these languages compared to an appropriately matched monolingual child.

Rationale

Initially, the primary focus in language learning has been on reading and writing skills. Subsequently, people moved to focus on their speaking and listening skills as well. This has been due to the changing global language landscape where fluent speech is appraised more than flamboyant writing. Such a major change was possible to accommodate as globalization and the advent of the Internet allowed access to resources in the language of learning. Apps such as Duolingo and Edmodo took over the language learning market and soon found their use in traditional language classrooms as well.

There has also been a change in what people look at when assessing proficiency and fluency in a language. These standards have also changed over time. There has also been a huge change in the kind of resources available now; the most popular are mostly IT-based or require some form of technology. In this dissertation, I will be discussing how advancements in technology have affected the way Indians develop fluency. Since the topic of language fluency in India is a very vast topic, I will be condensing it down to only English Fluency in India. Why only English? As the number of Indians who are learning English is on the rise. Thus, I plan on looking into the impact that technology has had on the acquired English language fluency in India.

Methodology

I plan on conducting this research by undertaking Primary as well as Secondary Research.

Primary Research

1.   Interviews with:

a.　[REDACTED] at the British Council.

b.　[REDACTED], an IB and IGCSE French Faculty in Mumbai.

c.　[REDACTED], a private French trainer working at [REDACTED] and has been using Technology to train her students for over 10 years.

2.　A survey conducted at [REDACTED] High School, Mumbai.

Secondary Research

1.　Referring to impact reports published by the British Council.

2.　Other online sources including publish research papers in this field of knowledge.

The Relation of English and Indians

Since the British Colonial era, English Speakers have been considered elite. This is still prevalent as non-English speakers are still considered inferior and have way lesser opportunities in life. Several candidates lose out during job interviews just because of their limited proficiency in English.

In India, there is no fixed status given to English. Its span depends on where the person lives and the degree of exposure they get. People in urban settings get higher exposure and thus speak English as L1 or L2, while people in rural areas lack this exposure and thus speak English as L3+. This status of the languages they speak is decided by their fluency in the said language as per the Common European Framework Reference for Languages (CEFRL).

Most Indians are assessed not only on their educational qualifications and personality traits but also on their proficiency in English. As a former British Colony, India was compelled to be an Anglophone country, with most, if not all, of the administration is in English. With even

the remote Indian villages now being exposed to the suburban culture due to rising standards of living and media, the parents often aspire to provide their children education in English as it is presumed that this would facilitate a brighter future.

There is also a vast difference in the educational infrastructure in an urban and rural setting. More remote the village, the less in the proficiency in English. Remote villages often suffer due to poor connectivity.

Traditional Classroom vs. IT Enabled classroom

One teacher, over 20 students huddled up in one room, 1 blackboard and a box of chalk and a duster, this is what a traditional Indian classroom looks like, with just the chalk and the blackboard being replaced with a whiteboard and markers in a tad modern schools. The teaching was barely student-centred, and incentivized memorization over understanding and cognition.

More research conducted in pedagogy indicates that a student-centred approach is better suited for language acquisition. This was made easier with the use of technology as certain aspects promoted autonomous learning. However, several Indian schools have started investing in upgrading of the traditional classrooms to IT-enabled classrooms.

IT-enabled classroom is the one that utilizes Information Technology Systems to support and optimize knowledge delivery and enhance the learning experience. This can be done through the use of offline and online services such as Edmodo or hardware such as smartboards. These systems could be quite expensive, and thus their use should be optimized.

Some schools provide students with tablets for use in class. However, these gadgets could distract the students more than helping them. To prevent this, the tablets can have firewalls, which prevent unauthorized applications such as games and prevent access to unauthorized websites.

With systems like smartboards, teachers need to be trained to efficiently incorporate their use in their lessons. The smartboard should not become the centre of attention in the class, and neither should its use be limited. With modern language teaching techniques focusing on a more student-centred experience, the IT system becoming the centre of attention makes the lesson counter-productive. Secondly, if the system does not provide enough opportunity for the student to communicate, they might not be able to take advantage of the IT systems.

Certain schools could also use applications such as Byju's which focusses on grammar and syntax more than the actual use of the language. Yes, grammar is an essential part of any language, but the way these applications practice grammar is less than useful. Tasks like identifying and differentiating between parts of speech are less likely to impact a learner's language skills positively.

Evolution of IT-based Language Learning in India

In the 1950s, language learning was mainly text-based, with textbooks, and focused mainly on reading and writing skills. By the 1980's when computers were starting to gain popularity, a new concept of Language Laboratories started, which soon evolved into CDs, and applications.

Initially, the language classes were similar to traditional Indian classrooms with printed textbooks being the primary source of all knowledge. Reading and Writing skills were emphasized the most. Speaking and listening were not given as much importance.

As computers became widely available, along with pre-recorded cassettes, the concept of Language Laboratories thrived. These places were basically rooms filled with several computers and headphones, with or without cubicles that students could purchase a membership to. Any member could go there and listen to pre-recorded audio tracks from the cassettes. One of the limitations was that it was highly reliant on electricity, a concern in rural parts of the country. Another problem was that the service provider had to update their collection of cassettes routinely to stay relevant. However, this was overcome after the advent of the Internet. Language laboratories moved from offline tracks to online tracks. While still being very reliant on electricity, it helped the students get access to a seemingly limitless pool of audio tracks, some of them even available free of cost.

The advent of Language Laboratories marked the beginning of a different era in the language learning landscape in India. It allowed students to practice listening and speaking skills. This was an advancement as these 2 skills were never focused much before the large-scale use of computers.

Soon, even textbook publishers caught on to this trend and started providing CDs with resources and audio tracks with printed copies of their textbooks. The ones that did not provide textbooks had codes for a learner to access the resources from an online library. This allowed students to practice listening and speaking skills with any computer, making the experience convenient, and accessible to those who do not have any language laboratories near them.

With the invention of cellphones, especially smartphones, one could carry out most of the tasks from their smartphone, anytime and anywhere, increasing the accessibility and convenience. For example, a student can now listen to authentic audio in the language of their choice even when they are, travelling, and do not have access to a computer.

Now, language laboratories are quite a rare sight with almost every person having a smartphone, and all the inconveniences they had, overcome with smartphones.

How has Information Technology helped?

The British Council has been a pioneer in teaching English as an L2 and L3+ while making extensive use of modern technology. Their programs are focused more on people with primary and/or secondary education and are a part of the labour force.

Their programs combine the use of traditional classroom teaching methods and using E-Learning platforms like apps, and video classes. Apart from the use of E-Learning platforms and programs, the British Council also uses other electronic tools during their lectures as a teaching aid. The use of such technologies has helped make their face-to-face sessions more interactive.

To tackle the difference in infrastructure, the British Council has started a program called English and Digital for Girl's Education (EDGE) in India, Bangladesh, and Nepal. This program is designed to train adolescent girls in English and ICT to make them more employable while empowering them. Despite being designed for girls, and only teaching concepts relevant to girls of that age group, several boys from the village have also been attending this program. It has greatly improved the literacy and employment rates in rural

Assam. The EDGE program uses tablets and desktops to conduct their sessions via video-presentation applications such as Zoom. They also use this hardware to make exercises.

As per Mr █████████, an IB and IGCSE French Faculty in Mumbai, the level of fluency is highly dependent on the quality of audio material the student is exposed to. He has been using applications such as Edmodo and EdPuzzle in his classes to develop listening skills which indirectly enhance speaking skills. Edmodo allows the teacher to upload videos from popular sources like YouTube to prepare worksheets to improve listening skills.

Another application he has been using is EdPuzzle which allows teachers to use published videos from various sources, and to add their own voice-overs, questions and annotations. These apps promote autonomous learning, even while studying in a traditional classroom. The availability of audio and video material, both authentic and recorded, has accelerated the pace of language acquisition.

Miss ███████, a private foreign language trainer in Mumbai, working with ████ ██████████, says that use of social media is also helpful. Platforms such as Twitter could help students learn to pen down their thoughts in a limited, safe and formal environment. It also allows other people to join the chain through the hashtag. She also made her own social media service using an app building platform called Ning, which allowed her students to interact with Mexican students who were learning French as well to socialize and learn about each other's cultures. This project was called E-Tangen, and it gave the French language a role as a language of the mediation and not just that of common ground. She also encourages the use of applications that give learners a chance to reflect on their mistakes, instead of just giving them the right answers.

How are these E-Learning apps different from Traditional Classroom teaching?

Various apps have now come up, such as Duolingo, Babbel, and Memrise. These apps tend to trick the learner into thinking that they are playing an online game, with a more interactive Graphic User Interface, giving motivational incentives like "You're on fire", "Keep it up", etc. after every small achievement. It sends the users emails if they do not access the app often, with messages like "You make Duo sad" in order to appeal to their emotions to have them keep using the apps. In order to better understand how effective these apps were, I conducted a survey in my city. Due to logistical reasons, I had to conduct it with students of a local school whose English Language resource levels were similar to that of a school in rural India.

Survey at ███████████████████████████ High School ██████, Mumbai

The methodology of the survey

I partnered with the school's L D P E Faculty and conducted a survey for over 1 month. I first conducted a 20 question pre-intermediate test with 10 students each from grades 9 and 10. 5 students from each grade were put in the experiment group, while the rest were the control group, ensuring that both the groups had even representation of students of all the levels. The experiment group was asked to use the Duolingo app in the school's ICT Lab. They had 30 such lab sessions, starting on November 12, 2019, and ending on December 19, 2019. A final test was conducted with the same 20 students again on December 20, 2019, to see if there was a difference in the rate of learning the students in the experiment group. During this month, all the 20 students continued with their school schedule as normal, attending their regular English lessons, with the Duolingo sessions complementing the regular lectures for the experiment group. The results of both the tests are shown in Appendix 2.

Initially, the plan was to only have the students use the app in school for 30 minutes every day. However, within the first week, most of the students installed the apps on their parent's smartphones and started using it at home, in addition to the sessions in the ICT Lab. Since they made their own Duolingo accounts, their progress from their work at home was added on to what they were doing in school.

During the debriefing session with the participating students, a short informal interview was conducted to gain insight about why they decided to get the app for themselves, what differences they noticed in their usual teaching and the way they learnt on Duolingo, and other questions along those lines.
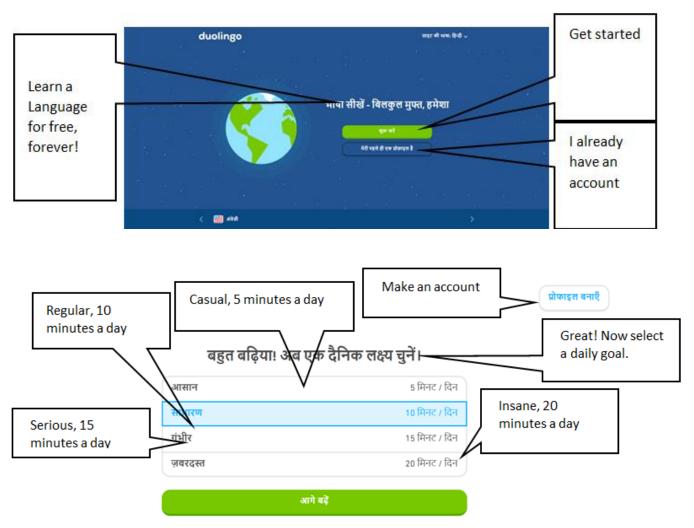
Why Duolingo?

The Duolingo app seemed to be the best option to use at this time considering that it is a mobile app that could be used from a desktop without giving up on any of the features that it would give on a smartphone. Since the students at ███ High school come from a financially underprivileged stratum of the society, it was more feasible for them to use it in the school, on the desktops in their ICT lab for the best results, instead of having the regularity of their practice being uncertain depending on the availability of a smartphone.

Moreover, this experiment has limited expense as the app used, Duolingo is a free app. The students who had access to smartphones also benefited and got the apps for their parent's smartphones for use and practice at home. They used it for an hour every day.

When a user first starts Duolingo, it prompts the user to choose whether they are first time users. If the user chose the first time user option, like in our experiment, it leads the user to a

page where they choose the language they wish to learn and then asks them to choose why

they want to learn the language, giving the options School, Travel, Brain Training, Career, Culture and Other. Once a purpose is chosen, the app asks the user to select a Daily Goal. The Daily Goal is the minimum amount of time that the app will motivate the user to use the app every day. Duolingo divides this into 4 levels, Casual Learners (5 minutes a day), Regular Learners (10 minutes a day), Serious Learners (15 minutes a day) and Insane Learners (20 minutes a day). Despite these daily goals, the app does not restrict the user to use the app for the time duration they choose and lets them practice for longer if they wish to. It then prompts the user to create an account via their Facebook or via their google accounts. Both of these

options require the user's name, email address, and date of birth to auto-fill, and asks the user to choose a password. Once that is done, the user is given an option to take a placement test by choosing the "Already know some [Language]?" option, or the user name choose to start fresh choosing the "New to [Language]?" option.

The placement test grades the user's current language proficiency by asking them some pre-set questions based on the parts of the language the users are expected to know at a particular level as prescribed by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFRL). Based on the proficiency exhibited by the user in this placement test, the app lets the user skip the first few modules that the app's AI feels are well understood by the user.

The app's learning Interface promotes learning through comprehensible input and constant testing. The learning exercises usually ask the user to translate, speak out or type a sentence or phrase from the user's language to the desired language or vice versa, choose the correct form of a verb to fill in the blank, etc. It even gives images to help the user translate the words while giving audio feedback reading the word they have clicked on. Usually, 3-4 such translations are followed by a question which requires the user to combine those translations. Post 5 questions a green animated owl, named "Duo", which is the app's mascot, appears displaying statements like "Your hard work is paying off", along with in-app rewards like "lingots" which are somewhat like an in-app currency to purchase "boosts". The app also has a concept of XP or experience points that a player can earn by completing more lessons. This XP is counted towards a global leaderboard where the user's XP decides their position on the board.

Such a system helps young learners stay hooked on something productive and to develop themselves. Duolingo notifies users about people surpassing them on the leaderboard, and about them not reaching their daily goals. If for any reason, the user happens to not use the app for an extended period of time, the app sends forth messages encouraging the use of the app.

In the background, the app records the time duration of a user using the app, most likely from the IP address, recording the times at which the first and last data packets were shared. The app has a well-developed AI which helps Duolingo identify various accents to grade questions which accept audio of the user, speaking out the given phrase. The app also uses a technique called "Spaced Repetition" where it asks the same question repetitively even if the user gets it right the first time. This ensures maximum retention of the said concepts.

However, some might find Duolingo to go overboard with its perfectionism. It penalizes users for the smallest mistakes in spellings and pronunciations. There have also been comments that the sentences and phrases the app asks the users to translate are too absurd for them to relate to them. Some of the users have also expressed concerns with the accents that Duolingo trains them to speak in. For example, in Spanish, accents differ across different countries, and a person from a Latin American country might not understand a person from Spain due to the difference in their accents. This is something a learner can better grasp and develop only with a human trainer as then they can practice in different accents. So far, Duolingo does not offer any ways to change the accents.

Results of the Survey

The experiment yielded conclusive results. Of the 20 students in the test group, 4 showed a score raise of 5-6 points. The rest had a rise of 1-4 points or did not have any

change on their scores. The average score rise in the test group was about 3 points while that in the control group was 0.45 points. 40 students did not have a record of any learning disabilities. The results might differ if the sample size is increased, and a record of any learning disabilities that the participant might have is maintained.

However, after discussion with the school's L D P E, the students did seem to show improvement in their skills even if their scores said otherwise. This could show that despite people thinking that technology can be foolproof, in the end, it does come down to how well it is put to use.

Analysis

Despite the positive effects of technology on the language learning sphere, getting people better opportunities to excel at life, as we see in the example that Miss Prachi shared with us, there can be negative consequences of these applications. Just like any other mobile application, even these applications could create a dependency or an addiction that could negatively affect one's lifestyle. Teaching someone through mobile games could cause them to focus only on that one subject, affecting their performance in the other subjects in case of school and college students.

Conclusion

To conclude, technology has its own benefits and its own drawbacks. This statement happens to be valid even for technology that teaches people languages. However, using this technology in the right way, or by using multiple ways of learning a language online could help one exploit the potential of E-Language Learning to the fullest. For example, using video chat sites such as iTalki could help overcome the accent and perfectionist constraints of Duolingo.

Virtual chatting sites or platforms that give students access to real-life use of the language they are learning has proven to be effective as experienced by Miss ███████. These apps can also be used to complement traditional class-room learning as Mr ██████, an IB and IGCSE French Faculty does in his class to yield him better results than ever before. However, as Miss Prachi said, some of the popular applications have unorthodox ways to train people, having further unorthodox definitions of fluency. So, is it fair to expect these applications, and this technology to work just as efficiently even in the future, and see an improvement in the effectiveness of these IT systems?

Appendix 1: Interview (via email) with ███████████████████████ in India for the British Council.

a)   British Council has   been a leading organization when it comes to teaching English to non-English speakers. What methods has the organization been using so far?

The British Council offers face-to-face teaching in more than 80 teaching centers in more than 50 countries across the globe. We have a clearly defined statement of approach to teaching which describes our methodology, there's a copy here.

b)   What changes has the British Council made to their teaching methods to accommodate the changing demands?

Our teaching methods come from constantly keeping up-to-date with language learning research. Our teaching teams have ongoing in-service training sessions to keep their skills updated on a regular basis. We know from experience that a communicative and student-centered approach to learning is the most effective to help our learners use English confidently in their daily lives.

c)   What changes has the British Council adopted to keep up with changing and advancing technology?

We keep up-to-date with all developments in teaching, and the use of technological tools to aid language learning are no exception. As well as face-to-face classes which incorporate technology such as interactive whiteboards, we offer a range of learning resources. For example, online programmes we offer include blended learning courses in India (myEnglish, myEnglish Workplace and IELTS Coach) and globally we offer a range of MOOCs and learning apps.

d)   How has the use of Internet facilitated a broader and wider reach of British Council resources even to the remote cities in Asia, especially those in India?

I think the Internet allows people the opportunity to access our courses and benefit from our teaching expertise when previously they would have had to live close enough to access our teaching centers or libraries. Course and apps like those mentioned above mean people can log in from anywhere at any time and learn. Of course, access to Internet with a decent bandwidth can still be a barrier for some, but that is also rapidly changing.

e)   What more changes do you have in mind to keep up with the aforementioned advancements in technology?

It's not so much changes as accommodations. Technology is not a methodology, it's a tool. Throughout history, education has accommodated new tools – from moving from chalk and slate to pens, for example. In the right hands a tool can enhance your teaching but the teaching approach is still the key to learning. As an example, we conduct e-moderator training for our online teachers so they can understand how to use online tools effectively to ensure the classroom is learner-centered and communicative. We will continue to keep up with advancements and ensure we integrate those that best facilitate learning. Personally, I am excited about the potential of AI to aid learners – for example programmes that can analyze speech and give you feedback on your pronunciation are in development –that would really help learners who want to improve speaking skills.

f)   What is the British Council's take on the method of immersion to learn English?

I can only speak for myself and my own experiences living in foreign countries – I've learned a foreign language much faster when I am surrounded by it and have to use it to get by in everyday life. In India, the fact that English is one of the official languages means that many

people (especially in metro cities) have exposure to the language on a daily basis so that's an advantage to learning. When we teach our online classes, we have people attending from all over the country (and sometime beyond) and often English is the only language they have in common, so the classroom itself becomes an immersive environment which really helps people to progress. To be fluent means you don't have to stop and translate everything before you speak so it's always good to work towards being able to think in the second language you want to learn.

g) How has Technology Integrated teaching/learning affected the language learning landscape?

As I said above, the accessibility and the flexibility of learning online really opens up opportunities for learners. I believe a key skill for the workplace is being able to manage and self-direct your learning and technology certainly allows one to personalize one's learning experience, choose from a vast range of resources and work on the areas one needs or wants to, and at times to suit one's schedule. It is also important, to remember technology is still just a tool and not a miracle solution – you may be interested in [this talk](#) which explores these themes very well.

Appendix 2: Results of the survey

All means of identifying the participants have been removed so as to maintain their privacy.

Participant ID	Initial Score (out of 20)	Final Score (out of 20)	Change in score	Average change
1T	7	8	1	
2T	7	12	5	
3T	7	8	1	
4T	7	13	6	
5T	7	10	3	
6T	7	11	4	
7T	8	8	0	
8T	8	12	4	
9T	8	14	6	3
10T	8	11	3	
11T	8	9	1	
12T	9	14	5	
13T	9	10	1	
14T	9	14	5	
15T	9	15	6	
16T	10	12	2	
17T	10	13	3	
18T	11	13	2	

19T	11	12	1	
20T	11	12	1	
1C	5	6	1	
2C	5	5	0	
3C	4	4	0	
4C	6	7	1	
5C	3	4	1	
6C	8	8	0	
7C	4	5	1	
8C	6	6	0	
9C	5	4	-1	
10C	7	7	0	0.45
11C	8	8	0	
12C	8	9	1	
13C	4	6	2	
14C	10	12	2	
15C	10	10	0	
16C	6	7	1	
17C	8	8	0	
18C	4	6	2	
19C	6	4	-2	
20C	7	7	0	

a)   How long have you been learning French for?

I've been learning French for over 20 years.

b)   What methods did you initially start to learn French?

When I started learning French, it was very traditional. We had a proper text-book and a notebook. We didn't have much resources for Listening and Speaking. Especially for Listening. We could practice speaking by talking to other students and with the teachers. There was no resources for listening what so ever. Frankly speaking, the courses back then were all about learning a language from the point of view of reading, writing, and the grammar involved. Listening and Speaking were skills that were not really emphasized upon.

c)   As a French educator yourself, with extensive experience, how do you think these methods have changed overtime?

First off, there are a lot of online resources, and we also have new methods to integrate Audio Visuals into our lectures. There is also many software to teach/learn languages. These have made a lot of difference, especially when it comes to grasping. A Student's grasping has improved a lot since technology has been integrated into Language learning.

d)   What is your take on learning a language by the means of Immersion?

I feel that immersion is the best way to learn a foreign language. Although I haven't had much personal experience with immersion, but I've seen students in their first year of learning a language, opt for an immersion program and succeed greatly in the language they are learning. Immersion develops your instinct to pick up the language. You are in it all the time, and you have no way to escape it. It becomes second nature to you very fast. In fact, immersion has proven to be effective and useful that in Europe, it is mandatory to undergo an immersion while learning a language of a neighboring country. There are programs like Erasmus and other exchange programs by institutes that facilitate exchange of 1 year, to help learn the language from the source country.

e)   How has immersion itself been affected by the change in technology?

Yes, definitely. Technology has affected the teaching of all the subjects, especially language. It has given us access to the cultures, music, media, films, etc. of different countries. These are all non-traditional methods, not just reading a book, and answering comprehensions. The best way to learn a language is through its culture, its movies, events, and media. When I was a student, I was doing a Diploma in French that had a topic called Civilization. Whenever I wanted to see what was happening, I had to go to the center, which had a subscription to the daily newspaper. That was the only way for me to catch up on to Current Affairs, and one of the questions in my exam was based on current affairs. The paper at the center was also 1 week old as it was sent from France via post. Now, it's all available online.

f)   What methods have you been using to train your students?

Now-a-days, methods are more participation based. There is this carousel, then there are Kahoot quizzes, there are interactive French exercises. We also have apps which help you

learn a language. So, there are may be innovative ways to learn a language. We can have a debate too. In short, the methods today are out of the mold.

g)   How has the use of comprehensible input worked for you while teaching?

I've got good results with it. Their performance has improved every batch.

h)   Considering the difference in grammatical structure, vocabulary, and diction, what method in your opinion would suit best for an average person who is learning French for the very first time?

There are a lot of resources available which have supplementary online accounts, which have all the material to give you an experiences very similar to that of immersion. For example, if there is a chapter on hobbies, there will be links to interviews of youth about their hobbies. So, you are not just learning the chapter theoretically, but you also learn the pronunciation from the interviews, and get an idea of the target language culture. So, the material for teaching a foreign language today is very holistic and covers all the skills of learning a language, unlike the past which only focused on reading and writing. Today, they also include speaking, listening, and intercultural understanding.

i)   How has Technology integrated teaching/learning affected the language learning landscape?

It has had great effect. As a teacher and a student, I had very scarce resources to learn French. At that time, the only French literature I had access to was from the Library. I used to go to second hand book sellers, one of whom used to manage to get me French in-flight magazines. This gave me access to more literature. If I had to find the meaning of an idiom, I

would have to go to the library and look for the meaning in a book of French Idioms. Today, I can just type the idiom online, and I get the meaning of it. So, technology has facilitated Language Learning to a very deep extent.

a. **So how long have you been using technology to teach your students?**

For over 10 years.

b. **What kind of technology you are using to teach your students?**

I initially started experimenting with blogs, and after that, I went on to other social media services like Twitter. Then we created a platform using Ning, and we called it Mumbaikar in French. Ning allowed us to create a kind of social platforms, but for all the students of ███████, the institute I work at. It was like Facebook, in fact, but it was with the aim of learning, and it was made very clear to the students who used it. Allowing is to go beyond the four walls of the classroom, my students were able to interact not just amongst themselves, but also with students of other classes. It was a platform where they had groups for classes, and where the teacher has put up things and they could answer but everybody could see each other's answers. If they wanted to do something extra or wanted to discuss something, they had discussion forums for that as well. The discussions here could be initiated by the students or by a teacher. It also allowed members to comment on each other's blogs, posts, etc. exactly like Facebook. Every student also had their page. So, this was done when I had done a few projects called E-Tangen. E-Tangen was done on Ning.

For E-Tangen, I tried with simple blogs on BlogSpot but also through Twitter and on this particular platform that I told you about, Mumbaikar in French. The idea of this E-Tangen is similar to the age-old concept of pen-pals. Suppose you're studying French in India

and there is a student in France studying English. So, you would exchange with each other through letters. That is how a pen-pals program would work. Now what we did is we gave it a social dimension as well. There was one big group, the macro group comprised of my students here in India and another group with French learning students from Mexico. The beauty of this is that the Mexican students had learned French, but their mother tongue was Spanish and my students had different mother tongues, mainly they were Anglophone, and they were studying French. French is the only thing they had in common. They would converse with each other in French, but it became a beautiful opportunity for both the groups to exchange their culture. So, the role of the French language that they were learning changed, it became a language of mediation. So, through French, they were discovering each other's culture and it was very interesting because usually in India, there's very little information available about Mexico. Similarly, in Mexico, they know about India, but that is not first-hand information or second-hand information available about India or today's India and young India etc. So, that became very interesting for both of us and through that, I would say that we discovered not just cultural differences, but also discovered cultural similarities, and all this happened through a language that they were acquired, which was French. So, this E-Tangen was not just with Mexico. I also did it with students from Belgium once. There we created a social networking website, but it had more limitations because you can't have children less than 14 years old. This, however, was not a problem for IB students and 10th graders. It was like a virtual exchange program. We had that with a school in Belgium. And they spoke French as their mother tongue. They wanted to learn English but here

my students are doing it in French. Okay, so, there we went even beyond and made videos. A similar thing was done on Twitter.

With Twitter, it was mostly aimed at my students who were working, and it connected them with students in France, all the students were in different age groups. Twitter allows you to have an exchange that does not happen simultaneously. As in, I tweet just now and you could acceptably respond hours later. So, that is what we worked on because of the time difference between the two countries. All the participants had the freedom to tweet at any time, from anywhere. For this exchange, we created a hashtag. This hashtag was shared on forums for French trainers so they could join in if they wanted to. Another program that is now available is WhatsApp. WhatsApp helps in doing projects. Suppose I'm teaching my students interchange how to decide on a rendezvous or a meeting, they have to decide on what time they're meeting, and that can happen through WhatsApp, it's an actual real-life exchange.

There are these small tools, which you can use in the class itself like for example for vocabulary today there is answer garden or then when they are doing any other projects, and they need some help, there are so many other small tools and apps today on the internet that they can use. For example, if you're writing you want to make fewer mistakes, there is a tool that helps you to check whatever you have written and then it tells you your mistakes, for you to reflect and learn from them. I have also used this tool which might have now disappeared, it was called Audioboom. So, they had the ambition of making something like the audio version of Twitter. At that time, it was not possible to send audio or video files. I did a theatre project, but it was a radio theatre. So, in Germany, for example, there was this kind of radio theatre, and even in India, in regional

languages we find it, we had done of a French play, but the radio version of it. I may be forgetting a few projects, but yeah, these are the main things.

c. **How do you think using technology is different from what schools would use? Schools would have a traditional classroom with one teacher writing on the board. So, how is that different from what you've been doing, from what technology helps you do?**

I think it's what do you have to look at what methodology is being used. So, there could be a teacher with simple chalk and a blackboard. But that teacher might be using the correct methodology which is communicated to teach language. And so, there's nothing wrong in that kind of teaching. The problem is when the teacher, whether or not she/he is using technology if that person is only giving out knowledge or teaching, is giving us knowledge, instead of making us discover the new language, all the rules or whatever the "knowledge" is supposed to be. So, I feel the problem lies in there. For me, whether you're using technology or not using technology, what is the most important thing for me is that are you a guide of that student? Are you a facilitator of those students? Rather the learner more than the student, and are you a facilitator or are you that "sage on the stage"? The attitude and the approach are more important than whether you're using technology or not because there might be teachers who will be using technology just for the sake of it. If their fundamental approach towards teaching does not change then it's not worth it. On the other hand, I know schools in rural areas and in a tribal area where they do not have many tools, but they can use simple Blackboard and simple chalk. But if they have the right approach, they will make their learning engaging. Engaging the learner is what we aim or right? That should be the right thing in teaching a language, or

in any teaching. If you're using technology, I place more importance on how you're using technology. You know, see, it's very sad, but whenever we say "oh, let us use technology and that is the modern way of doing it, and we are not going to use a Blackboard". What I say is that whether it is a smartphone or a blackboard, these are tools, how to use the tool that is more important because using the tools is not an engine itself, what is more, important is how you're teaching. It's how you're using it. For example, I have seen horrendous examples of people thinking that oh, let's use technology and so, let's buy smartboards. Initially buying smartboards cost a lot of money, and only a select few schools could afford it and that's how they "lured" I would say the parents and the students saying "see we are so forward that every student has a tab and every class has smartboards." But then if that smartboard is taking the entire attention of your class or if you're using the smartboard only to write down what you are writing on a blackboard, how is it different from what your teachers were doing? Especially in language learning, if you see there are these different methodologies that will evolve, that evolved over the years, and there is something called communicative approach. So, today what we are using is a communicative approach, and a further extension of that is task-based learning, or as we call it in French, Apprentissage Actionnelle. What communicative approach tries to do is it tries to put the learner at the centre of the learning, which was the right thing to do. Now by putting a smart board in the classroom, if you're going to make that smartboard the centre of attention, then you're going backwards, you're not going forward. So, how to use the smartboard that is a technical prowess that is required, that is this pedagogical understanding of that tool and how to use it correctly, to not make any "faux pas" in your pedagogical correctness.

So, that is important. I am glad that there is more technology in schools now, but at the same time, I also hope that it is being used properly.

To give you a very simple example, there is this famous app called Byju's, it's everywhere. I have never used it myself because I don't teach those levels, it might be a good product. I saw the ad and what I'm saying is based on that ad. A girl is sitting in front of the screen with her mother, finding proper nouns if remember right. She is writing her answers on a sheet of paper, and the app is correcting her. When her answer is wrong, she's dejected. Then the mother is saying let's cross our fingers once more. The child tries it again and gets it and it is right this time. Then the famous actor Shah Rukh Khan comes and says, oh see this is interactive, etc. So, the problem is people do not understand the term "interactive" exactly means. I would say that Interaction and Interactivity are two different concepts. A person talking to or interacting with a machine that is not important. What matters more is one individual interacting with another individual. The machine that is there, the tool that we are using has to facilitate the communication between two individuals. So, when I give you the example of my E-Tangen projects, what was happening, there was a platform, there were computers. The role of that was facilitating communication between students in two different countries.

Many times whatever new products come to the market and I see that most schools will just go ahead and make those heavy purchases and talk about how much they have spent. They are technologically sound products because technicians have made them, but they end up being flawed because the school has very little knowledge of pedagogy goes into it. When you analyse all these means and the technological changes that have happened in teaching, you have to, first of all, see whether it is web 1.0, web 2.0 or web

3.0, In the traditional kind of exercises, grammar exercises very often, is not the way forward in language acquisition. Grammar is at the service of communication. And that we said way back in the 1980s and 1990s. Again, in the 21st century, like the third decade shy of 21st century, you're going g back like that, most of the exercises, we know the grammar exercises, they are just put up into that mode, on the internet and so, it is called interactive. It's very ridiculous in my eye. Instead what you have to see is how to facilitate real communication. If you want to acquire a language you have to practice the language and that's my view about this.

d. **So, in a general situation assuming that the technology is being used in the right way, do you think that it could help a student grasp a language better?**

Of course, if it is used correctly, yes, it helps a lot. Technology today is a part and parcel of a learner's life. Today, whoever is 18 years old or 15 years old is a digital native. Like when I started using the internet, I had already finished my MA. When I created my first Hotmail ID, I still remember the amazement. I found it very amazing that within a second my email had reached somewhere else. I'm not a digital native, I learned internet like that, or I learned anything to do with computers later on in my life. But today whomever we have in classrooms, especially in schools, and colleges, they are all digital natives. So, they might use computers as effectively and as efficiently as my generation and perhaps even better because it's a part and parcel of their life. So, you're using something that they are used to, and are using it to make them acquire something extra which is a language. If used effectively, technology 100% with it helps. I have absolutely no doubt about that. But then I will always say that do not get mesmerized by the tool that you're using, do not lose focus from what you have to make them acquire. That is

important and those pedagogical reflexes are more important because technology in itself does not solve a problem. To give you another example, in 2010, I was in France and I was attending a conference where the person was reading out his paper. So, he was French and then he gave the statistics about India. They were talking about many other countries also but when it came to India, he gave statistics about how so many people are under the poverty line, etc. and many schools do not have basic amenities and how the internet and computers are going to create a further divide, that was his viewpoint. I'm very glad to say this today because nine years ago, I had told him in that conference, I said, "Listen, I think that this is a solution and not a problem, what you're saying this is the solution because it's going to bridge that divide." And I think today that has happened because if you see there are these experiments done, where journalists just kept the computer in one village at the office, and people learnt on their own. Even governance is happening through digitalization and corruption can be curbed like that because you have got access to people directly and people have direct access to whomever they want in the authorities. Similarly, I work with a few NGOs and they work in tribal areas, mostly at these Adivasi hamlets. So, you would have a school where students come from very far, sometimes from a few kilometres away. You can imagine the problems and the teachers are not very well paid, etc. Yet I have seen the best-motivated teachers over there. Some teachers themselves took an initiative to digitalise the school, and the NGO I worked with helped them in that. Some money was put in by the NGO, some money was put in by the government. But my point is that even at that level, that tool is engaging but it has to be used effectively.

There is this place called Hemalkasa, founded by Prakash Amte. There is one school there. I have visited this school and I have seen how students are doing it over there. You can contact Hemalkasa directly, you will find their website and such and it is very easy to contact them today. You will find their projects, amazing projects.

They are using computers big time and that too when they do not have access to the internet throughout. So, what they have done is they have created a database for themselves. And similar to my E-Tangen project, the students at this school come from tribal backgrounds. So, they do not even speak Marathi, their mother tongue is Madiya, which is a tribal dialect and they are not learning Marathi, they are learning English.

They are providing English as a language. And what these people have done is since internet access is not 24/7, they have downloaded most of the things that are required and they have created a platform. My platform was online and theirs is offline. But it still creates a network of students. So, there was a beautiful thing that happened when I was there. There was this girl, she had presented the whole room and their project to us when we had visited them. So, she had read one book in Marathi a huge book by Dr Achyut Godbole, who is a big name in the IT industry. She read that book and she was very motivated. So, she wrote a review on that and she published it on her blog.

Then Dr Amte forwarded that link to Dr Godbole. He was very impressed. He offered to pay for the girl's higher education in Mumbai or Pune. Good for the girl, but what I'm saying is that girl was having access to knowledge from everywhere. So, there is a lot of democratization of knowledge. And I was touched when I was there. I saw so much happening. People from my NGO also, we went there, my brother was also there. And so, my brother asked one of the veterans over there who had worked on the Hemalkasa

project from the beginning. And so, he said, we are working in another area like this. So, what is your advice because sometimes we students don't want to come to school, and within a second the man said computer. The computer has that motivational factor. So, even those who are not using it in everyday life, they are, you could say captivated by the presence of a computer, they want to learn that, and then it gives them wings. They fly with it because then the teacher's presence is nominal.

The teachers are there to show how to do it for the first time, maybe at the most and then they can choose on their own. Technology also gives you the choice. Suppose when I'm learning a new language, I'm interested in one particular aspect of that language. The internet gives me that possibility to be interested in that more than my other students. Differential learning can happen. Somebody else is interested in one aspect and I'm interested in another aspect and class it is not getting covered as much, but I am interested. So, I go ahead with it. Because there is so, much information. Internet may give you information, the internet does not necessarily give knowledge, so, to transform that information into knowledge is through an enquiry model and that is the role of a teacher today. Having access to information, giving information is no longer required by a teacher. In French, when you're learning past tense for example, earlier you needed me to tell you these are all the rules and this and that but today you can find all that very easily, so, where is my role? My role is not giving information. Let's take a cultural aspect because in language acquisition cultural aspect is also important. So, if I have to tell you about the Louvre Museum, then the museum's website can do it better than I can do it. You can also have a virtual visit of the Louvre Museum. So, my role is not that any longer. I have to understand that as a teacher. My role is no longer to dispense

information. My role is to make you a better learner, I have to teach you how to learn, also see to it that you're guided correctly so, that through inquiring, you can transform that information into knowledge.

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