

# Mother tongue to English & Teacher to Technology: Role, Existence and the Contradiction.

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## Abstract:

The explored possibilities of revolution in academics chances exposing the challenges of policy makers, instructors, material developers and institutions. In each challenge, from the Grammar translation method to the communicative and task based approaches, the role and existence of a transition from mother tongue to English, teacher to the facilitator, and from facilitator to the voice (technology) show signs of contradiction. These contradictions seem to be cyclical, and raise the expectations of the academicians. But, with the revolution of system based self learning in academics, there is less likeliness of a cycle, if the role of English and Technology absence the role, importance and existence of mother tongue and teacher. Lack of realizations on mother tongue 'Language capabilities' (Durairajan, 2009) and 'Teacher importance' (Jantine, et al, 2011) might only foresee their inevitable disappearance. Teacher expression may provide the difference to stand on par with the transitioning revolution for mutual existence.

**Key Words:** Mother Tongue, English, Teacher, Technology, Policy Makers, Instructors, Material Developers, Institutions, Language Capabilities

## Introduction:

India would stand as a remarkable symbol of mutual existence, united in diverse multi-lingual and multi-cultural pluralistic society, accepting revolutionary changes from the time of British Raj. To explore this symbolism, two universities which are considered to express the mirror image of India, have been chosen for the study. One is 'The English and Foreign Languages University' (EFLU), where multiple languages are taught, studied and encouraged. And the other is 'Rajiv Gandhi University of Knowledge Technologies' (RGUKT), where online system of education is practiced for learner autonomy. While students of EFLU seemed ideal for examining the role, existence and contradiction in the revolution of mother tongue to English, the students of RGUKT seemed ideal for exploring the role, existence and contradiction in the revolution of teacher to technology. They have been preferred based on the observance of what was being exposed over the last few years; the disappearance of quality words in mother tongue and reduction in the number of teachers at a near multiplying rate. The cause of concern is the strength and possibility of mutual existence in the steady revolution where everybody seems to notice, but not accept and realize such inevitable disappearance.

**The Problem:**

The belief that is carried by the ESL speakers is assumed that the mother tongue is safe and co-exists with English equally inspite of the medium being used is only English, and the belief that the emergence of technology does not lessen the importance and existence of teachers. In that case, it is the necessity of the ESL speakers to understand the reason for the emergence of 'European Year of Languages' in 2001. David Crystal (2004) says that it was a revolution to produce a radical shift in the consciousness or behaviour of an individual because of three reasons. Firstly, the emergence of English as a global language. Secondly, the realization that a huge number of languages are endangered or dying. And, finally, there is a ground-breaking arrival of Internet technology. The focus here is not the emergence of English as a global language but the realization of huge number of languages dying and the role and sustenance of a teacher in the world of technology.

**The Need:**

In India, from the Minutes of MaCauley to the grammar translation methods of Michael West, and from there, communicative and task based approaches of N.S. Prabhu to learning centered methods of Kumar Vadivelu, the teaching and learning of English has changed over the years and took shape, but not a word of the mother tongue is heard or spoken. From radios to messengers and from transparencies to over-head projectors, and from there, to internet video lectures on computers and Whatsapp on mobiles, less is spoken about the teachers, but a lot about the online courses and online exams. Having convictions that these changes are cyclical based on some contradictions of mutually existent challenges, like the realization of Michael West's use of mother tongue to teach English in certain institutions in recent times seems to raise false expectations. This is a limitation. Keeping the ESL learners and the teachers wary of their limitations and apprehensions is important, and is the need of the hour.

The need of the hour directs us to three important questions which need to be answered and two hypothetical statements that need to be verified.

**Research Questions:**

1. Q) How has revolution in English Language affected mother tongues?
2. Q) How will the revolution in the use of technology affect the teachers of English?
3. Q) What measures need the teachers of English take to challenge the stated revolutions?

**Hypotheses:**

1. Mother tongue does not get affected with the use of English as a medium in schools.
2. Teachers' importance and existence is not affected with the advancements in Technology.

## Realization & Verification:

Many articles have been published on the use of mother tongue in the class rooms, but very few have followed, and strangely this seems to be happening only in the classrooms of English and not in the classrooms of other subjects. This could be evident when none of the English medium students could answer what Geography, History, Civics and Economics were called in their mother tongue.

This would lead to likely attrition and loss of many Indian Languages, an incidental outcome because of hegemony. Language proficiency needs to be envisaged differently by stepping outside language education, outside education itself and trying to see language use as ‘functionings’ and ‘capabilities’. Respecting, nurturing and sharing mutual space with other languages is important, which is not a reality in language classrooms in India (Durairajan, 2009).

In a university like ‘The English and Foreign Languages University’ where learning of languages is encouraged, it could be noticed that the ESL learners could not speak fluent mother tongue without the usage of English words for a time ranging between one – three minutes. Using English words never seemed a problem. But, the words that were used and not knowing some of their meanings was a cause of concern. This shows the death of the words in the mother tongue and its future. Crystal (2004) says that at least one language is dying every fortnight.

Five EFLU, ESL students with Marathi, Telugu, Bengali, Banjara and Malayalam as their mother tongues were asked to speak for a minute or two on anything related to their education, University, family and friends. This was to test how many and what English words they have used in those two minutes speech of theirs. The words spoken in English and their number can be seen in Table 1.

**Table 1: English words used in one - three minutes speech of Mother Tongues of Five EFLU Students**

Marathi	Telugu	Bengali	Banjara	Malayalam
close	and rent	the very next day	Mummy	post graduate
<b>problem</b>	<b>problems</b>	dining	Develop	Diploma
<b>course</b>	<b>courses</b>	first semester	Hostel	in teaching
Like	subject knowledge	class	Canteen	of English
<b>friends</b>	<b>friends</b>	<b>friends</b>	Help	<b>Friends</b>
facilities	so 2007	circle	Weather	Exposure
Ok	<b>Ph.D seat</b>	<b>Ph.D</b>	City	<b>Ph.D</b>
<b>means</b>	Financial support	<b>means</b>	Entertainment	Explore
information	prepare	suffered a lot	But	Malls
<b>family</b>	<b>family</b>	health	<b>Family</b>	<b>Family</b>
Areas	<b>education</b>	basically	<b>Education</b>	Close
<b>University</b>	<b>University</b>	<b>University</b>	<b>University</b>	<b>University</b>
Solve	clear life	accommodation	railway stop	Atmosphere

Share	class	most probably	Train	English
backward	coaching institutions	in a group	Degree	Company
Likes	<b>intermediate</b>	nostalgic	<b>Intermediate</b>	Place
	<b>library</b>	second semester	<b>Library</b>	50 pages
	english language			B.A. English

Also, it was noticed that the same ESL speakers who spoke to their parents over the phone in their mother tongue, used less English words. But in a formal context, when asked to speak for a minute in their mother tongue, many English words were used by them. Sadly, this seems to be because of their mind that has been tuned by the teachers and to an extent, by the parents and the neighborhood. It might also be because of the consciousness of speaking their mother tongue, when asked to speak. Contradictorily, there were cases when learners wanted to do well and tried to speak only in their mother tongue, controlling the English word that was about to be articulated.

However, looking at table 1, it can be comprehended that all the quality words, used most regularly are being replaced by English. The words highlighted in bold indicate that these words are lost in the other mother tongues too, failing the first hypothesis.

This is where it can be assumed that a language teacher needs to address the shortcomings, the importance and the loss of mother tongue to the ESL learners.

But, where's the teacher? With the emergence of technology, a teacher might easily be replaced by any gadget of technology.

Universities like 'Rajiv Gandhi University of Knowledge Technologies' may not need a teacher. They have online education system, where video lectures are screened over the projector and 70% of their exams happen through online. With laptops at service, there might not be the need for a class.

During their vacation, 'Whatsapp', an application on mobile was used as a tool to post a question, 'Why do you skip classes?'

Getting responses was not tough at all and the responses to the question can be seen in table 2.

We have online materials/Video lectures to study	14
Teacher doesn't teach well/Teacher is boring	16
Others	4

It can be seen that majority of the learners (16) skip classes because of a teacher not teaching well or is boring. Fourteen learners responded that they have video lectures and online materials to study and had no reason to come to a class. Four students opted for the other options to skip classes. From this, it can clearly be comprehended that students skip classes if the teacher doesn't teach well and because they have video lectures to depend on. It may also hold true that these two together might be the cause for the learners to skip classes. The curious thing to notice was, not a single person said that they do not skip classes.

Also, the responses received through 'Whatsapp' for the first question, encourage the posting of a second one on the status line. The question posted on the status line 'Will technology replace teachers? Why?' drew more attention and more responses. What followed was an interview with some of the learners of RGUKT whose responses can be seen in the bubbles in Fig. 1.

Fig. 1 shows 21 responses. Out of 21 responses, one response was from a senior well wisher and the remaining 20 responses were from the engineering learners of RGUKT spread across three batches. Eight responses were from the 2014 passed out batch. Six responses were from the 2015 passed out batch and six more from the current final year batch.

These responses were received at different points of time, according to the convenience of the learner. More questions were posed on their responses and received further more. It was an interview on 'whatsapp', a mobile application used as a tool for the research. There was neither any need for recording nor attentive listening to avoid the loss of information. It was a text message and their responses could be read any number of times.

There was no need for a classroom and this is because of technology. The responses received on 'Will technology replace a teacher? Why?' were diverse. The responses which were contradictory or the words which indicated contradiction were bolded and were marked in 'red', while the responses that were positive were bolded and were marked in 'green'.

Seven responses were marked (in red) to be contradictory while nine responses were marked (in green) to be positive of the scope of replacement. Five respondents felt that the replacement of a teacher can never be possible. The seven marked in red agree with those five that a teacher cannot be replaced, but their contradictory statements reveal otherwise. Nine of them marked in green, though want the teacher, they agree that there are possibilities of a teacher being replaced by technology.

On close observation, it can be noticed that most of the seniors do not agree, while most of the juniors (current final year batch) agree to a teacher being replaced by technology.

Fig. 1. RESPONSES ON WHATSAPP FOR THE QUESTION “WILL TEHNOLOGY REPLACE TEACHERS? WHY?”

Technology is a part of a teacher. Online courses are also designed by a teacher. Doubts are also clarified by teachers. Once palm leaves were used, later books and black boards and now laptops and projectors are being used. But teaching and teachers always existed. Change happens and teachers are part of change. Not everybody will recognize a teacher equally, but their value never diminishes because of that. I would **still** prefer classroom training to an online one.

1. Swapna Sree (Sister)

Technology can only facilitate and not substitute a teacher. Even to understand online courses, they need basic knowledge which comes from the teachers. **But**, learners like kids need support and someone to guide. That someone is a teacher. Teacher develops cognitive skills and the acumen of thinking, which is the very purpose of education. Benefits of the presence of a teacher in the early years of education are multifold. Teaching is not a mere dissemination of information. A teacher inspires, motivates and mentors.

2. Rajitha (2014 passed out batch)

Nothing can ever replace a teacher. I agree that technology is of great importance, but it cannot mentor or guide a pupil. Even to learn technology, you need a teacher. There are videos that guide but we need a comfortable person around us to guide. Only a person can understand a person, not a machine. Lessons through technology are not as effective as taught by a teacher. They are one source of education, but they are not the only source, where we can get 100%. The satisfaction of having a teacher around is a feeling which cannot be put in words. I agree, but only to a certain extent. Technology teaches us, but it cannot say what is right and what is wrong (virtues required). The happiness of talking face to face with a teacher is just becoming a dream to the future students with the advancements in technology. Technology will just ruin the student-teacher relationship. Online content doesn't encourage a student's learning. Students need personal counseling and care. Online content doesn't do that. Human interaction is missing with online learning. Online teaching cannot show empathy. It cannot deal with student's emotions. I call it materialistic. **Given a choice**, I would choose a teacher over hundreds of links. If Saina Nehwal doesn't need a coach, why spend so much on a coach. I haven't seen Karna or Ekalavya. We don't have coaches. But, all star players have coaches. If sport began without coaches, why have these coaches come into existence? I am not saying technology has no role to play, but technology alone can't make a player. Teachers will be an exception. Technology will become an asset but can never become a teacher. Only a teacher can teach ethical values. A computer cannot lend a helping hand. Many people have lived, but quality of life is better with a teacher. When a teacher is not around, we carry their words and experiences with us.

3. Praveen (2014 passed out batch)

I think, No! Technology will help to learn the content. But, values and mindset can't be taught by technology. **Kids** learn by imitation. There has to be some reward and consequence for every good and bad action learnt. He can listen again if he wants to, but he wastes time, that he can't get. First the student will listen for reward and then pays attention.

4. Krishna (2014 passed out batch)

Never. Because, learning 'live' would be remembered for a longer period.

5. Arun (2014 passed out batch)

No. Technology can give info. But cannot guide and motivate. Technology reduces the no. of teachers, I think. Technology may give knowledge but fails to teach the ethics, moral values and humanity. Technology is a source and teacher will guide the students to the technology through wisdom. Nobody concentrates on video lectures. Student's mentality is different. Direct communication affects more. In spite of video lectures, students get remedial if there is no teacher to teach. Internet videos are only an optional way of studying. Teacher can change the minds who are not interested also. Technology will help to learn more, but the base is teacher. Teacher teaches according to the standard of the students. A teacher can identify the weak points of a student. Can a video lecture solve a problem of a kid, as in the movie 'Tare Zameen Par'. Students are immature in a young age. Teacher is necessary for perfect education. **If a student who wants to study only will exist in future, then technology can replace a teacher.**

6. Paramesh (2014 passed out batch)

I think, **Yes!** It does replace. In a strong and well founded manner. Technology is the building block of advancement.

7. Sandeep (2014 passed out batch)

**Possible.** In the past, we never thought we could have a video lecture. In the future, we may find something which could revolutionize the system. In this fast paced world, anything is possible. Teacher being replaced by technology is no exception.

8. Yasar (2014 passed out batch)

Primary purpose is learning. While we can learn at our interested times, **why to learn in classes.**

9. Rahul (2014 passed out batch)

Technology is operated by the so called teacher of that field.

10. Anusha (2015 passed out batch)

No. Never. Without teacher, there is no technology.

11. Naresh (2015 passed out batch)

No. Technology won't and can't replace a teacher anytime in the future. A teacher is an important part of a learning process and technology of any standard can't replace or complement **a real teacher**. The knowledge inculcated by a teacher can't be done by any virtual entity of technology.

12. Sudheer (2015 passed out batch)

13. Swathi (2015 passed out batch)

Technology will only share the knowledge. Teachers will share the knowledge along with their life experiences.

**May be one day, it will replace.** Eg. China has introduced a driverless train. Robot might replace a teacher. But, it might not happen in India because of the unemployment problems. This might lead to collapse of the Government. Teacher is always important in one's life in each and every step. No one is aware as everyone is enjoying technology. Indians have the habit of accepting new things slowly. It is like slow poison. A child is operating smart phones. Idea network says that there is no need of a teacher with the IIN advertisement. People are excited to use technology.

**Yep. Definitely,** technology replaces the teacher for sure. Now-a-days, many teachers are useless and not suitable for the meaning of a teacher. Students are preferring many video lectures and online material. In future, it will increase in all aspects. May be, all the features of good teacher can be programmed.

Online material can be used any no. of times. It reaches everyone. Online course cannot make someone understand the subject wholly. Some one should be there to guide them. Students cannot study themselves. A teacher is a must. May be, 1% of the students learn by themselves.

14. Dinesh (2015 passed out batch)

15. Uday (2015 passed out batch)

We need a teacher to explain us technology. Teachers have experience

16. Harish (Current final year batch)

17. Jyothi (Current final year batch)

Even if one learns on internet, he definitely needs someone to guide. That someone is a teacher. Technology replaces teachers who don't teach well. In case of school students, teacher is a must. They are learning through social media, but only social aspects, not academics. There are videos, but virtuality is different from reality. Learning is happening through technology, but not 100%. In future, technology will not replace teachers completely. There will be mentors. Technology is for better efficiency and comfort. It is easy to learn from a teacher. I am habituated from childhood. **To replace teacher by technology, it will take time.** At present, there will be unemployment in India.

18. Sai Krishna (Current final year batch)

19. Madhu (Current final year batch)

Teachers cannot be replaced by technology. Teachers are the source of technology. People who invent and develop technology get knowledge from teachers. Technology only helps but can't replace. We can learn from computers but teachers are physically there and can help explain things easier. **May be in future, there will be virtual reality.**

In my view, **it replaces in future.** Everybody now, is getting addicted to present technology. In our campus, we are addicted to video lectures and we don't need faculty in fact.

20. Bharath (Current final year batch).

21. Sofi (Current final year batch)

**It can replace.** But, language cannot be taught without teachers. Languages are representatives of our culture. It is happening. Everyone wants to be professionals. So, technology will lead them to success very early. It takes much time for teachers to analyze a student. Students don't want to lose their incubation period. So, they prefer technology over teachers. Basically, students depend on technology when teaching is bad. Some faculty advises them to use technology for more information. When, they get more information from technology, why does he need a teacher? All they need is a guide.

Sixteen of them, either wholly or partially believe that technology might replace a teacher. This is sufficient to declare that technology might replace teachers, failing the second hypothesis.

It is hard to digest the fact that it is the teachers being replaced, but if you look at teaching as a career, one may be bound to accept the fact. But, with the prevalence of online learning courses like MOOC, NPTEL and others, it can be questioned whether a teacher can ever be replaced. But the debate on the existence of a teacher goes on, as the teacher who was once called a guru is now called a facilitator and tomorrow, he might just be called a technician or a guide. There are also contradictions raised on the existence of a classroom. As it can happen on whatsapp, online courses and blogs at convenient times, the chances of a classroom necessity seem to be less.

However, Chesser (2012) says that the arguments would go on, but the role of a teacher in this world of technology is very important.

A role of a teacher is ever changing and a teacher must adjust to the needs of the learners and self. It is evident that the role of a teacher diminishes and technology would assist, but if a teacher is not tech-savvy and is not used to be on par with the changing technology, the teacher is bound to forego the career as a teacher or a facilitator or a technician.

### **Implications & Conclusion:**

From the findings, it is very clear that the mother tongue needs an up-lift. The policy makers should realize and deploy dual-medium schools taking cues from the University of Limpopo, Africa where dual-medium degrees are practiced. The academicians and the institutions should adopt these as quickly as possible and encourage the learners to use mother tongue in their schools.

It is also evident that if teachers are not on their toes in catching up with the technology, they cannot sustain and can easily be replaced by technology. Also, a teacher who is boring and cannot teach well is not attended by the learners. So, updating one's knowledge seemed to be very essential. From the responses gained from the learners, a teacher whose class is lively and who shows personal attention and guides is well appreciated and can for ever exist.

From the hypotheses, it can be concluded that medium only through English affects the mother tongue and the advancements in technology affects the importance and existence of teachers slowly, but steadily despite the contradictions.

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