

The Current Pandemic and Changing Role of Classroom Analysis Theories

Dr. Mahesh Sharma, Assistant Professor of English, Faculty of Sabda Vidya, Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, Varanasi, 221007

Abstract

The most significant transformation the current pandemic has brought globally is the notion of unpreparedness on behalf of governments, as well as the citizens of the nation. Suddenly, because of the virus, there was a check and almost a despotic control on the movement of the people, on the liberties, and a forced sense of adjusting to the new normal without giving enough time to the people. Besides various other areas, the current pandemic certainly changed how we learn and teach in the traditional setup of the classrooms. The post-pandemic society is undoubtedly more technology-oriented and futuristic. The present paper aims to analyze the various pedagogical innovations the teachers had to undertake during online teaching during the pandemic. The report advocates the foregrounding of different theories of classroom analysis along with various cognitive approaches in online teaching setup.

Keywords: Pandemic, Online Teaching, and Tools, Cognitive Theories, Models of Classroom Analysis, Computer-Assisted Language Learning Approach (CALL)

Acquaintance with the theories of classroom analysis is beneficial on multiple levels. It not only helps the teacher plan well and advance but also molds the teaching experience according to the fast-changing scenario in the post-pandemic world. Moreover, a sound knowledge of classroom analysis theories can be fruitful while teaching in the classroom. On the outside, teachers can find their utility judged best according to the classroom standard. Since teachers are aware that students go through different stages of development, they can also prepare the lectures and identify the middle of

the notes accordingly. By doing so, teachers can avoid conflict of interest and try to find their teaching under the standard of the class. Photos capture the suddenly changed scenario well:

Recently, educational institutions and the broader global academic community underwent a tremendous shock, practically having to shift from onsite to online teaching overnight. Under the strangest of circumstances, teachers and learners have been rushed into taking their whole course(s) online, which might have caused feelings of distress and agitation to those involved in the endeavor. From a teacher's perspective, the transition resembled trying to navigate through the uncharted, rough waters of synchronous or blended online teaching on what seemed to be a makeshift, flimsy raft in the hope of finding dry land. Naturally, survival in this new environment became a priority, and issues of approaches, methods, and pedagogy were, to a great extent, left behind. Familiarising ourselves with online teaching platforms, their properties, and tools; bypassing technical glitches; and getting learners to join online classes, to begin with, have been the main concerns for most practitioners, at least at the beginning of this venture. To cope with the challenges, practitioners turned to their peers via professional fora and social media, seeking support and information about day-to-day online teaching practices and advice, which has had both positive and negative implications. On the one hand, teachers' collaboration and exchange of ideas have

been significantly advanced and have occurred at an unprecedented rate. Still, on the other, the latter are often overwhelmed by the information overload on offer. (xi)

However, the classroom analysis theories should not be used as a blanket theory because every student is different from each other, and sometimes some students develop differently. It helps a teacher design the different types and levels of assessment for the classroom. Knowing the salient features and the limitations of other cognitive stretches, a teacher can also provide appropriate stimuli to different students at various levels to support and help the students to grow phase-wise.

Among other critical theories, the knowledge of the cognitive theory makes the learning instruction best and more fun. For a teacher, what should matter most is the process rather than the outcome. What matters most is that the teacher should first get the knowledge of the student's existing knowledge and then try to help the students build upon it slowly by giving practical examples. The teacher should also not hesitate to take the students back to the basics whenever and wherever needed. The learning should come out of a delicate balance of experience and context and should promote a kind of readiness among the learners to learn new things. I think that the knowledge of cognitive theories will immensely help a language teacher as the nature of language teaching depends on the guided help provided by the knowledgeable other according to the development stage of the learner. We provide different levels of materials to students like beginners and intermediate advanced. A teacher should know when and how to give this material to other learners in the classroom. The technique of role-playing or group discussion sometimes breaks the ice and allows the students to enter into a platform where the interaction can give birth to new ideas (Harmer; Diane Larsen-Freeman).

Teaching English in India as a second language is challenging because teachers and learners must adequately understand the

requirements, objectives, and qualifications. The cognitive development theories, which provide a beautiful combination of both the psychological and linguistic theories, provide training to the teachers to understand all the different biological and psychological phases through which a learner grows. Since the cognitive development theories stress a lot the notion of understanding the needs of the learner, helping the students to guess the meaning from the context, using concrete images so that an idea can be memorized well, and various other fruitful ways to learn a language well, these theories can be helpful. According to the cognitive theorist, the role of the social milieu, learning environment, and actual parrot strategies play a critical role so far as learning is concerned because, according to them, knowledge is more of an internal mental phenomenon where all these factors play a vital role (Barrouillet).

Training teachers in this particular discipline will enable them to understand their students better. They tend to become role models for their students. The teaching should provide enough opportunities for the learners to grow intrinsically. It needs to be flexible and should aim toward the learner's holistic development.

Sound knowledge of these theories helps me understand the mood fluctuations, behavioral patterns, and hesitation of the students in different standards of class whenever I teach. Since these theories stress a lot the various stages of development of the human brain, it also helps me to plan my lessons accordingly; for instance, in my junior classes, I always bank more upon the strategy of repetition, reading out loud together with the learners, giving them constructive feedback, etc. I always spend some initial classes to create a very peaceful environment in the classroom where first I understand them well and then try to help them get involved in the active process of learning. Because most of the students I teach come from Tibet or the Himalayan region, I tend to pick up the stories deeply rooted in their own culture and tradition. This also enables me to distinguish the slow learners from the quick learner in the classroom so that I can help the slow learners

separately after class also. I tend to teach them first from very concrete realities of their life struggle and the notion of their identity and then take them further to the abstract concepts of Buddhism. I'm deeply impressed by the theory of proximal development and scaffolding because I understand that in the absence of a family structure, our university students tend to develop a different dependency and lean towards the teacher. I also promote peer learning in my classes. Before explaining the relationship of cognitive theories to the theories of classroom analysis, I would like to analyze the importance of theories of memory and motivation in the dark times of pandemics.

Theories of Memory and Motivation

Learning in general and language learning, in particular, can be a very challenging and daunting task for any level of learner. Learning is dependent on two essential factors of human nature – the first is motivation, and the second is memory. In my opinion, more than memory, it is the element of inspiration capable of molding the learner towards an upward spiral in learning. Motivation can be internal or external.

The knowledge of different stages of memory like encoding, storage, and retrieval enables both the teacher and the learner to work on the skills in a better way. With the help of some techniques like repetition and flashcard methods, the information stored in the short-term memory can be moved to long-term memory. The stress of taking notes systematically and categorizing the information well helps the learner, especially in English classrooms. The various mnemonic devices, the techniques of association, and learning in pairs of contrast and similarity are some techniques to help the learner enhance memory. Memory supported with proper motivation and essential variables can be appropriately utilized to anticipate the exhibition of authentic learning, even of new languages and fields. Since learning is a lifelong process, it becomes essential to provide a continuous source of inspiration and motivation for the learner. Sometimes the family can play the role, providing valuable learning material and good

discipline. The place or even the teacher can be the cause of motivation for the learner. Reason leads individuals to take action to achieve a goal or to fulfill a need or expectation. The basis is capable of commanding a process of making suitable choices (Brandmiller et al.).

As we all know, the relationship between motivation memory and learning forms a fabric of educational institutions. I want to explain the point further by picking up a text I teach at my university, a specific institute for Tibetan students living in exile in India. This unfortunate condition in which they have to live in India also provides a cause of motivation for them. This is a fantastic example of finding a silver lining in a dark cloud. I have often realized that while teaching them a novel that is either written by Tibetan authors or if it is about Tibet, the students tend to approach the text with a higher level of self-motivation by internalizing the information rather than memorizing it. For example, I had difficulty teaching them the different periods of English literature, its history, the significance of culture and society, and various trends and movements. But once I started to give them an analogy of the kings and the queens of Britain and the other Dalai Lama in Tibet, they developed a different kind of interest in learning, and surprisingly they memorized the periods of English literature also really well because I was capable of giving them a suitable analogy.

When I was teaching them the concept of the hero's journey from Joseph Campbell's seminal text *A Hero with a Thousand Faces*, initially, they found it very difficult to associate with the alien culture and religion. But the moment I gave them a parallel in the life of the Buddha, who also, like any other hero, had to go through the same kind of cycle of exposure, difficulty, resurrection, etc. the class was capable of memorizing all the facts in Campbell's theory well and were also able to learn all the facts from the book. Given the importance of memory and motivation, now we are in a position to evaluate theories of classroom analysis.

The Benefits of Knowledge of Theories of Classroom Interaction

Classroom interaction knowledge certainly helps design various pre- and post-classroom activities. Moreover, it also facilitates understanding the patterns of classroom communication. The recent pandemic has undoubtedly affected the way classroom interaction takes place. The physical interaction with the students, where the face-to-face interaction allows a teacher to have better control of organizing the discussion and giving feedback, has given way to online digital interaction.

Though there are various difficulties in organizing an online class, It is also equally rewarding because online teaching not only defies the necessity of the presence of the students and teachers in the classroom environment but it also provides more autonomy to the students as they are present in the comfortable environment of their respective houses. The interface of the technology allows the teacher to have better control over online classes as the teacher, the administrator of the online course, has the authority to mute or unmute the students just with one click of the mouse. Moreover, it allows the teacher to record and permit the students to present their views or give feedback as and when required. Regardless of the size of the class, the digital space works like a helper for the teacher.

The teaching-learning process during Covid-19 was primarily supported by technology. The blended mode of learning and the integration of various 3rd party software like digital whiteboards and Jamboards has enhanced the level of interaction in the classroom. Although online teaching does not allow and support the role of asking questions in classroom interaction, it can be easily supplemented by using different digital tools after the completion of classes. Edmodo and Moodle played a significant role in enhancing the integrity and level of classroom interaction. Borowiak explains the duality of hope and despair of teaching online during the pandemic:

Based on experience gained in teaching students online in secondary school and university, the teacher noticed that online

teaching has many benefits. They can be grouped into those that correspond to students and teachers. Learners may overcome shyness related to speaking. Some students do not want to turn on their cameras and find it easier to talk in English when nobody looks at them. Moreover, they are more open to indicating whether they understand the material they learn or need more time to finish a given task. In this case, they can use various functions that do not involve speaking, such as "Yes/No" and "go faster/go slower." Online learning consists of the use of the Internet. Many learners tended to use their computers instead of mobile phones during lessons. Because of this, students can use online dictionaries to check the meaning of an unknown word or its pronunciation. They can use the web engine if they want to deepen their knowledge. The reason is that using computers instead of mobile phones can be more convenient for students. (155)

To explain the utility of various models of classroom analysis, I want to cite here the sample classroom interaction I had during the pandemic with an undergraduate class. The transcription is from "Critical Appreciation of "Araby" by James Joyce class, held on google meet.

Model Analysis

Online class – Critical appreciation of "Araby" by James Joyce

Teacher: Good morning, everyone. I hope that all of you have gone through the short story which was shared with all of you in our Google Classroom last week.

Student 1: Yes, Sir. Though I have read it twice, I found it hard to grasp the gist of it. I found the names of the characters very confusing.

Teacher: Okay. Unlike other short stories, this short story has neither the name of the narrator nor the protagonist. Can you guess the reasons for it?

Student 1: I guess because the writer either had something to hide or he wanted to have a universal appeal.

Teacher: That is a perfect interpretation. Okay, tell me, who is your favorite character in the story?

Student 1: Sir, I liked the character of Mangan's Sister.

Teacher: Yes, Mangan's sister plays a vital role in the story. But do you think enough dialogues are given to that character?

Student: No, Sir.

Student II: I like the character of the unnamed narrator.

Teacher: Okay. What do you like the most in the characterization of the unnamed narrator?

Student II: what is 'characterization,' sir?

Teacher: It is the art of presenting the characters who populate the story.

Student II: Oh, I see, sir. His journey from infatuation to adulthood is something I like the most.

Teacher- Okay. Do you find any connection between the character and the setting?

Student II: (Silence for a while) Ummm.....Ummmm.....what is 'setting,' sir?

Teacher: Setting is the description of time and place. Can you find out the place and time of the short story?

(Silence) (Whispering sounds) (They are not able to find the information easily)

Teacher: am I audible to all of you? Did you understand my question? If yes, kindly respond. Don't worry about being right or wrong.

Student II: (After a while) I did not think about it while reading the story, sir. But I believe that the writer has emphasized a lot on the dark and lonely streets to represent the internal loneliness of the character.

Teacher: That is good. I am happy that all of you are capable of understanding the story, even at the symbolic level.

Brown's Interaction Analysis System (BIAS)

According to Brown's Interaction Analysis System (BIAS), let's analyze the given classroom interaction. We can easily observe that the teacher, using the advantage of the

online tool, had shared the text and the notes well in advance. The teacher takes the lead and sets the context of the discussion about the story Arabi by giving the directions (TL- Teacher Lectures). To check the level of understanding of the story, the teacher now and then poses challenging questions about the content (TQ- Teacher Questions). The teacher also provides positive feedback by accepting the interpretation of the class (TR- Teacher Response). Motivated by the teacher, the students also respond positively to the teacher's questions (PR- Pupils Respond).

Moreover, one of the students even provides his interpretation and extra information, building upon his peer (PV- Pupils Volunteer). Students also have pauses and episodes of silence. Even the time when students are rereading the story to find out the information about the setting can be cited here as an example of X- Unclassifiable.

The Pandemic and Computer-Assisted Language Learning Approach (CALL)

Because of the outbreak of the recent pandemic and the global lockdown, the face-to-face classroom mode suddenly shifted to online classroom interaction. In a physical classroom, the teacher has better control over interaction as they can visualize the classroom in its totality. On the other hand, in a virtual classroom, there is often just a single individual talking at one time. The technological autonomy in the hand of the teacher as the administrator of the online classroom interaction provides them with an undue advantage to mute or unmute the participants collectively or individually. Usually, this format of online classroom interaction does not allow students to interact with other students. Without peer group interaction, it becomes a teacher-centric class where a teacher poses a question, and only one student is allowed to answer or respond at a time.

To break the monotony, a teacher should be inventive enough to use different tools to ensure the overall participation of the class with the help of discussion boards, online polls, and using assessment tools like Kahoot, etc.

Moreover, a teacher can also combine online shared platforms like Google Classroom, Edmodo, and Moodles to ensure active participation and feedback from the students. A teacher can also break the more prominent groups into smaller ones. The teacher can also use conversation cues to ensure spontaneous and guided responses among peers. The social networking platforms like Telegram and WhatsApp can also be used to implement a blended learning experience.

Among all the different models of classroom interactions, I found the computer-assisted language learning approach (CALL) in a blended mode most suitable during the pandemic. As it has the support of well-designed online platforms that can optimize the communication process, I found it better than FLAC, FLINT, BIAS, etc. Though I'm pretty aware of the apparent hurdles like not having access to smartphones or gadgets, weak Internet connectivity, and other hazardous effects of technology, during the pandemic, the window of a laptop or a phone emerged as an alternative teaching methodology and a source of interaction with the students. Since CALL also enables the instructors to utilize the assessment tools from time to time, it provides a total solution. In a nutshell, the effective use of Google Classroom and Schoology for managing and overall learning and interactive experience in general, WhatsApp, Zoom, Autodesk, Sketchbook, YouTube, Google forms, Quizzes, Polly, Kahoot altogether provided a very fertile environment for online classroom interaction.

Unlike other classroom interaction analysis models, CALL, if appropriately used, can also be an accurate time-saving tool in the hands of teachers for language learning. In addition, using the integrative technology approach in the process also helps capture and maintain the student's attention by using different games and visuals, thus increasing engagement. It also helps the language teachers to make their lessons more vivid and interactive, and students can immediately check their answers and get feedback.

As we can observe very quickly that the sudden outburst of the current pandemic has worked like a sudden shock, along with a ray of hope during troubled times. It not only challenged us from the perspective of educational resources but also forced us to come up with creative ways to understand the classroom interaction with our students. It has left behind a legacy that is futuristic in nature and optimistic in design.

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