The Critical Necessity of Integrating EdTech in English Literature Pedagogy in the Indian Classroom

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Abstract

The instruction of English Literature in the Indian higher education system has long been characterised by a fossilised, colonial-era pedagogy, often prioritising the rote memorisation of canonical interpretations over critical inquiry and creative engagement. As the global educational landscape shifts towards digital fluency, the Indian classroom faces a dual crisis: relevance and access. This paper argues that the integration of Educational Technology (EdTech) is no longer a supplementary luxury but a critical necessity for democratising and modernising English studies in India. By addressing the specific challenges of the Indian demographic—including severe linguistic diversity, large class sizes, and stark geographical resource disparities—EdTech facilitates a paradigm shift toward a student-centric, contextually grounded, and constructivist pedagogy.

Drawing upon the Theoretical Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework, Lev Vygotsky's Social Constructivism, and the post-colonial critiques of Gauri Viswanathan, this paper examines how digital interventions can decolonise the classroom. It explores specific technologies, including Virtual Reality (VR) for contextual immersion, Digital Humanities (DH) tools for distant reading, and Generative AI for personalised scaffolding. Furthermore, it aligns these technological interventions with the mandate of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which advocates for "multilingual pedagogies" and "digital literacy." Ultimately, this paper posits that technology acts as a "Great Equaliser," bridging the gap between the historical text and the contemporary Indian students, transforming them from passive consumers of colonial knowledge to active producers of global digital discourse.

Keywords: *Educational technology; English literature pedagogy; TPACK Framework; Digital humanities; NEP 2020; Artificial Intelligence in education.*

INTRODUCTION

The landscape of the Indian classroom is undergoing a seismic shift, caught between the inertia of tradition and the acceleration of the digital age. For decades, the study of English Literature in India has operated as a colonial legacy, often taught through a teacher-centric lens where the "sage on the stage" delivers definitive, unchallengeable interpretations of Western canons. This model, a remnant of what Thomas Babington Macaulay envisioned in his 1835 Minute on Education, was designed to create a class of interpreters between the British rulers and the Indian millions—a class "Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect." While the political empire has dissolved, the pedagogical empire remains largely intact in many provincial and metropolitan universities.

However, as the 21st century progresses, the limitations of this "banking model" of education—where knowledge is deposited into students by the teacher—have become glaringly apparent (Freire, 1970). The contemporary Indian student is a "digital native" (Prensky, 2001), processing information through hyperlinked, non-linear, and visual modalities. Yet, upon entering the literature classroom, they are often asked to power down their cognitive habits and engage with texts through archaic methods of transcription and regurgitation. This disconnect creates a "relevance gap," where students struggle with the cultural distance of the texts,

the barrier of English as a second or third language, and a lack of access to updated scholarly resources.

The integration of Educational Technology (EdTech) presents a transformative solution to this impasse. It is no longer sufficient to view technology as a distraction or a mere substitute for the physical book. Instead, EdTech must be recognised as a vital pedagogical mediator that can enhance literary appreciation, foster critical thinking, and equalise the playing field for students across the diverse socio-economic spectrum of India (Chakraborty, 2025). From Virtual Reality (VR) that transports a student from rural Bihar to the Lake District, to Large Language Models (LLMs) that act as 24/7 Socratic tutors, technology offers a way to democratize access to cultural capital.

This paper explores the critical necessity of this integration. It first surveys the literature on post-colonial pedagogy and the digital divide. It then analyses the unique socio-pedagogical challenges of the Indian classroom. Subsequently, it proposes specific technological interventions framed by the TPACK model, before concluding with an analysis of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 (MoE, 2020). The central argument is that EdTech is the only viable bridge between the "English of the elite" and the "English of the masses," making it indispensable for the future of the humanities in India.

LITERATURE REVIEW: FROM COLONIAL TO DIGITAL

To situate the intervention of EdTech, one must first understand the historical weight of studying the English language and literature in India. Viswanathan (1989), in her seminal work Masks of Conquest, argues that English literature was introduced in India not merely as a subject of study but as a moral instrument of control. This historical baggage persists today, where the English classroom is often a site of "linguistic elitism." Spivak (1993) expands on this, highlighting the "burden of English" where the language functions as a gatekeeper of socio-economic mobility. For the subaltern student, the literature classroom is often a space of alienation, where they are silenced by their lack of "Standard Received Pronunciation" or cultural familiarity with Western motifs.

In the realm **of educational technology,** Warschauer (2004) provides a critical framework for understanding the "Digital Divide." He argues that the divide is not merely about access to hardware (the "device divide") but about the capability to use technology for meaningful social practices (the "utility gap"). In the Indian context, this is crucial. While mobile penetration is high—with over 1.2 billion mobile subscribers (TRAI, 2024)—the pedagogical utilisation of these devices remains low. The smartphone is often seen by traditional educators as an enemy of attention rather than a library of Alexandria.

Mitra's (2014) experiments with "Hole-in-the-Wall" computers demonstrate the concept of "Minimally Invasive Education," suggesting that groups of Indian children can self-organise and learn complex topics with adequate digital access and minimal supervision. This supports Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory, specifically the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). EdTech acts as the "More Knowledgeable Other" (MKO), scaffolding the student's learning journey.

Integrating these perspectives, this paper positions EdTech not as a tool of Western neo-imperialism but as a subaltern tool of resistance. By giving students direct access to the text and the tools to remix, reinterpret, and rewrite it, technology dismantles the hierarchical authority of the traditional teacher-centric classroom.

THE SOCIO-PEDAGOGICAL CHALLENGES OF THE INDIAN CLASSROOM

The necessity of EdTech arises directly from the material and psychological realities of the Indian higher education sector. These challenges create a "pedagogical bottleneck" that traditional methods cannot clear.

The Mega-Classroom and the Crisis of Feedback

Unlike the seminar-style literature classes found in Western universities, which may cap at 15 or 20 students, Indian undergraduate classrooms—particularly in state universities—often house sixty to one hundred students. In extreme cases in colleges in Delhi or Kolkata, this number can exceed 150. In such an environment, the lecture method becomes a default survival strategy. The teacher speaks; the students transcribe. There is no space for the dialectic exchange that literature demands. Adika (2025) describes this as the "monologic trap," where learner anxiety is high, and individual feedback is mathematically impossible. A student writes an essay and receives it back months later, often with only a grade and no qualitative comments.

Linguistic Interference and the Culture of Silence

The linguistic profile of the Indian student is complex and heterogeneous. For a minority, English is a first language. For the majority, it is a language of aspiration, acquired in schools with varying degrees of competency. Research indicates that Indian students often encounter "linguistic interference," where the grammatical structures of regional languages—such as Hindi, Tamil, Bengali, or Naga dialects—clash with English literary syntax (Manju, 2024).

When a student struggling with basic English syntax is confronted with the archaic pentameter of Shakespeare or the stream-of-consciousness of Virginia Woolf, the cognitive load is overwhelming. This leads to a "culture of silence" in the classroom. Students are terrified of speaking and being mocked for their grammar or accent. Consequently, they retreat into "guidebooks" or "bazaar notes"—cheap, commercially available summaries that offer rote answers to exam questions. These crutches effectively bypass the critical thinking process, leaving students with a superficial, second-hand understanding of the literature.

The Contextual Vacuum

Literature is deeply rooted in geography and history. The "Lake District" of the Romantics, the foggy London of Dickens, or the trenches of World War I poets are physical realities that inform the text. For a student in a tropical

climate who has never seen snow, a daffodil, or a Gothic cathedral, these signifiers remain abstract. This "contextual vacuum" prevents deep emotional engagement with the text. The student reads the words but does not "see" the world.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: TPACK AND CONSTRUCTIVISM

To implement EdTech effectively, educators must move beyond "technocentrism"—the belief that hardware alone causes learning. The guiding framework for this integration is the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) model.

Developed by Mishra and Koehler (2006), TPACK argues that effective teaching with technology requires the intersection of three knowledge domains:

i. Content Knowledge (CK): Understanding the literary text, themes, and history.

ii. Pedagogical Knowledge (PK): Understanding how students learn and how to manage a classroom.

iii. Technological Knowledge (TK): Fluency with digital tools.

In the Indian context, the intersection—TPACK—is critical. For example, simply projecting a PDF of Hamlet on a screen is a low-level use of technology (Tech + Content). However, using a collaborative annotation tool like Kami or Perusal (Tech) to allow anonymous student comments (Pedagogy) on the text of Hamlet (Content) specifically addresses the problem of the "quiet student" (Context). The technology is used to solve a specific pedagogical problem: the fear of public speaking.

This aligns with Constructivism, which posits that learners build knowledge through experience rather than passively receiving it. EdTech facilitates "constructionism" (Papert, 1980) by allowing students to build digital artefacts—blogs, podcasts, videos—thereby externalising their understanding of the literature.

TECHNOLOGICAL INTERVENTIONS IN PRACTICE

It is necessary to translate this theory to the Indian classroom for better comprehension. The following sections detail specific technological interventions that address the challenges outlined above.

Bridging the Gap: Immersive Tech (VR/AR)

The "Contextual Vacuum" can be filled using Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR). While high-end VR headsets are expensive, low-cost solutions like Google Cardboard (which costs less than ₹300) use the student's own smartphone to create immersive experiences.

Pedagogical Application

When teaching William Wordsworth's Tintern Abbey, an educator can use a 360-degree YouTube video to transport students to the banks of the River Wye. Students can "look around" the ruins of the abbey, observe the "steep and lofty cliffs," and hear the sound of the river. Aslan (2020) confirms that such immersive experiences "deepen literary analysis" by making the setting a lived experience.

Situated Learning with AR

Augmented Reality apps can overlay information onto physical books. A student reading T.S. Eliot's The Waste Land could point their phone at the text and see a pop-up map of the London streets mentioned, or hear a snippet of the opera Tristan und Isolde referenced in the poem. This reduces the cognitive load of constantly checking footnotes, allowing for a seamless reading experience (Manju, 2024).

From Passive to Active: Digital Storytelling (DST)

To counter the "banking model," educators can employ Digital Storytelling. This involves students using tools like Canva, Adobe Spark, or basic video editors to create multimedia narratives based on literary texts.

Remediation

Students can be asked to "remediate" a scene from Pride and Prejudice into a modern Indian context—perhaps a WhatsApp conversation between Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy. This forces the student to understand the core themes of class and prejudice well enough to translate them into a new medium and culture.

Evidence

A study at Christ University, Bengaluru, demonstrated that DST significantly improved language acquisition. Because students record voiceovers for their videos, they practice pronunciation in a safe, private environment before sharing it, mitigating the anxiety of public speaking (Roy & Bhavani, 2026).

The Digital Humanities: Distant Reading and Archives

Digital Humanities (DH) offers a radical departure from traditional "close reading." Moretti (2005) coined the term "Distant Reading," which involves using computers to analyse large volumes of literature to find patterns that the human eye might miss.

Data-Driven Analysis

Students can feed the entire text of a novel into free tools like Voyant Tools. They might discover that the word "darkness" appears 50% more frequently in the second half of Heart of Darkness than in the first. This data point becomes the seed for a critical essay. It turns the student into a researcher rather than a passive recipient of the teacher's interpretation (Rockwell & Sinclair, 2016).

Democratisation of Archives

Historically, research in India was hampered by the lack of physical archives. A student in a rural college in Odisha could not access manuscripts held in Oxford. Today, initiatives like Project Gutenberg, the Internet Archive, and the Bichitra Tagore Online Variorum have democratised access. Kirschenbaum (2025) observes that this access "flattens the hierarchy" of academia, allowing a student in a remote village to view the original drafts of Tagore's poems alongside a scholar in Harvard.

Artificial Intelligence: The Personalised Tutor

The emergence of Generative AI (like ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, Copilot) represents the newest and perhaps most disruptive frontier. While there are fears of plagiarism, AI holds immense potential as a scaffolding tool.

The Socratic Tutor

In a class of 100 students, the teacher cannot answer every question. An AI can act as a personalised tutor. A student can ask, "Explain the concept of 'Negative Capability' in Keats using simple English," or "Check my grammar in this paragraph." This provides the immediate feedback loop that is missing in the mega-classroom.

Prompt Engineering as Critical Thinking

Educators can design assignments where students must debate with an AI about the character motivation of Macbeth. To "win" the debate or correct the AI's hallucinations, the student must possess a deep knowledge of the text. This shifts the focus from writing the essay to refining the thought process.

NEP 2020 AND THE POLICY MANDATE

The integration of these technologies is not just pedagogical best practice; it is a policy mandate. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 (MoE, 2020) serves as a blueprint for the digitisation of Indian education.

The policy explicitly calls for the establishment of an autonomous body, the National Educational Technology Forum (NETF), to facilitate the induction of technology. NEP 2020 recognises that in a globalised economy, English proficiency is a skill-based competency. It advocates for "multilingual pedagogies" (Ministry of Education, 2020, p. 62), encouraging the use of technology to translate concepts between regional languages and English.

Furthermore, the NEP emphasises increasing the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education to 50% by 2035. This massive expansion cannot be met by brick-and-mortar infrastructure alone; it requires a robust digital infrastructure (MOOCs, SWAYAM, blended learning) to scale quality education. As Chakraborty (2025) notes, the policy provides the "political will" necessary to force universities to modernise their curriculum and assessment methods.

IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Despite the optimism, the road to integration is fraught with challenges that must be acknowledged to be overcome.

The Device and Data Divide

While smartphone ownership is high, access to high-speed data and laptops remains stratified by geography and gender. In many rural households, the male head of the family owns the smartphone, and female students may have restricted access. Educators must design "mobile-first" and "low-bandwidth" pedagogies that do not exclude these students (Warschauer, 2004).

Teacher Resistance and Training

There is significant inertia among senior faculty who view technology as an intrusion. Effective integration requires massive faculty development programs that move beyond teaching "how to use Zoom" to teaching "how to teach with Zoom" (TPACK).

The Commodification of Education

There is a risk that EdTech turns education into a product delivered by private corporations. Universities must safeguard student data privacy and ensure that the curriculum remains driven by academic rigour, not algorithmic engagement metrics.

Screen Fatigue and Deep Reading

There is a valid concern that digital consumption encourages "skimming" rather than the "deep reading" required for literature. The pedagogical design must balance digital engagement with offline reflection and close reading of physical texts.

CONCLUSION

The integration of EdTech in English Literature pedagogy in India is not an attempt to replace the human element of teaching; it is a strategic attempt to rescue it. The current system, burdened by colonial legacies, linguistic barriers, and infrastructural deficits, is failing to engage the 21st-century learner. By providing immersive, collaborative, and accessible platforms, technology effectively de-centres the educator, freeing both the Indian student and the teacher to engage in a more authentic, critical, and imaginative exploration of the human condition.

Aslan (2020) argues that technology serves as a "pedagogical mediator" that bridges the gap between abstract theory and lived experience. Whether it is a Dalit student using digital archives to reclaim their history, or a shy student using an anonymous forum to critique a poem, technology provides the agency that the traditional classroom denies. For the Indian classroom to remain relevant in a globalised academic economy, the adoption of EdTech must be viewed not as an optional luxury but as a fundamental pedagogical necessity—the vital key to transforming the study of literature from a colonial inheritance into a contemporary tool for empowerment.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this manuscript. In addition, the ethical issues, including plagiarism, informed consent, misconduct, data fabrication and/or falsification, double publication and/or submission, and redundancy has been completely observed by the authors.

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