

A Study on Development of Language Lab and Impact of it on English Language Teaching

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ABSTRACT

We are dealing with the millennium learners with exceptional technical skills and low to no hold on English. Quite contrarily, the employment opportunities available to them demand and test the students command in English proficiency. It's high time that we started teaching these rural and urban students with the advanced technology in the classroom with some of the innovative teaching-learning methods and techniques. Likewise, one of the major challenges is that even urban students communicate in English with their mother tongue influence. To meet the global standards in English proficiency and to gain employability skills more than one and half decade are well equipped with exclusive language laboratories. At this juncture of time this paper stresses that the urban and rural students can develop their communication skills along with employability skills (including Soft skills and Software Etiquette) with the effective and efficient use of language lab independently and also interactively. It also highlights the teacher as a facilitator with the implementation of technical resources made available and the learner-centered activities in English, as Second Language teaching will surely bring life to a good learning experience for these millennium students.

1. INTRODUCTION

Good communication skills are indispensable for the success of any professional student. The four skills of Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking have to be practiced regularly. As we are depending on technological aid for practicing these four areas rigorously. It has a number of advanced facilities that can help a student to learn English language with proficiency to communicate. This article attempts to high light the significance of language laboratory and the challenges it imposed to the learners and to the teacher. The English Language Laboratory is one of the most remarkable Infrastructural facilities that the undergraduate students are blessed with these days. It was rightly speculated that a language laboratory is a must for teaching a foreign language like English. It is always our mission and vision to make the best efforts for students whose skills and efficiency in both spoken and written English are compulsory for the career success in this globalised world today. Since its establishment the English language laboratory is being used on the maximum scale and the huge number of students of all the departments under all faculties is being provided with its expert facilities irrespective of the core subjects they have opted. It is must to say that the technical benefits of the English Language Laboratory are properly exploited by the students under the active supervision and guidance of a number of adroit teachers.

2. TEACHING METHOD

The teaching items selected and the aids prepared for the instructional program through the language laboratory constitute the teaching material. Every teaching unit planned by the teacher contains a statement of objectives, both general and specific.

1. A statement of specific teaching item to be presented.

2. A situations to introduce different teaching items.
3. Adequate substitution tables for providing practice in instructional pattern regarding the teaching item.
4. Grammatical explanation involved in different teaching items.
5. Exercises for recapitulation.
6. Suitable self-learning/ checking material.

Language Learning Laboratory

The Language Learning Laboratory is mandatory to be divided compulsorily into two parts. The first part is named as the Computer Assisted Language Learning Lab (CALL) in which the students are provided with standard software to work with and a computer, a headset and a student terminal to work on the announced topic under the supervision of a teacher. This Lab is intended to improve the pronunciation of the students wherein they work with the structured syllabus to work for a stipulated duration each week for the number of hours systematically in this lab so that they understand the internationally standard pronunciation and they set their pronunciation to those standards. And the next part of the lab is named as the Interactive Communication Skills Lab (ICS) Lab, wherein the students follow the instructions of the facilitator and work according to him/her and participate in various single/ pair or group activities and come out to speak sometimes, write sometimes, listen sometimes and write sometimes in single, groups or pairs. The outcome of this lab is that in a stipulated number of hours and for a period when they work, they get interest or get motivated in speaking in English and by participating in pairs and groups they lose stage fear and thus start gaining confidence and by practice become familiar with the usage of the same.

Computer Assisted Language Learning (Call) Lab

The objectives of the Computer Assisted Language Learning Lab (CALL) are,

1. Work towards better pronunciation.
2. To study systematically all the English speech sounds.
3. Understand Body Language (Non-Verbal Behavior Interpretation).
4. Listening comprehension for IELTS.
5. Word Accent and Intonation.
6. Listening comprehension for TOEFL.

Interactive Communication Skills (ICS) Lab

The objectives of Interactive Communication Skills (ICS) Lab are,

1. Identify yourself (Psycho metric Analysis)
2. Express yourself
3. Express your views
4. Participate in Group Discussions
5. Excel in JAM sessions
6. Group Presentations in mock seminars
7. Based on LSRW
8. Film review and expressing opinion
9. Interview skills
10. Information gap activity (creative writing)
11. Role-Play and stimulation
12. Public speaking (lab Internal Examination)

Utilization of Language Learning Laboratory

English labs are made compulsory for students in many universities. In recent years the role of English lab has become very important in integrating the skills of students (with soft skills or life skills) with a lot of language practice through activity based learning in schools and colleges. To consider multimedia lab, it is largely based on "Learning by doing method" facilitated with self-learning materials. The learners are immensely benefitted through this multimedia lab. Typically the follow-up would be required for good communication skills in this lab and the ability to comprehend all the Information that is provided. It enables the learners to polish and refine their ability in articulating speech sounds with proper accent from the prescribed software modules.

3. ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Most of the population of the world is bilingual. If we observe closely all the students of the world are being taught a second language in their academic subject and English is the most common of it. At the time of learning any languages trainers and learners use language as an object of study and as a medium. The target language is not only about a new code for any concept but learning a new language and culture and new concepts. It is about acquiring a new vision to look the world with a new ways of understanding. English is world highest learnt language as a second language. Perhaps that's why it is also most researched one as a second language. In the field of linguistic he has given his best contribution. He has devoted his life for finding new concepts in learning second-language, bilingual education.

4. STAGES OF SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

There are several stages of learning any language. Judie Haynes is a scholar who has the experience of teaching elementary ESL for 28 years. She has authored and coauthor

many books on ELL. She and her son Charles is content editor of the award-winning website everythingESL.net. Judie actively works for NJTESOL/NJBE as a president. She observes a very important and the most common process of second language learning. Every learner who learns English as a second language undergoes through five common stages of language learning. Every stage may differ learner to learner even can stop learning on any stage.

I. Pre-production: In this stage learner is silent who can recognize English language but can't speak. Learner's vocabulary is limited up to 500 words in one's passive vocabulary. That means a learner is able to understand speaker's speech but can't speak it independently. It can be called a repetition mode. At this stage visuals may help a lot. Gestures of teachers and related images can clear the basic of it. It is also called a listening period for the learner.

II. Early production: Second stage is a baby step stage for new learner. Here learner starts converting one's passive vocabulary in to active and develops 500 more words in to passive means 1000 words. Here a learner can answer in one word or can speak common phrases. Learner is generally comfortable with words and phrases which are being exposed daily. Yes no question and short answers are very common at this stage.

III. Speech emergence: When learner reaches to third stage one is been learning English since at least one year. The vocabulary is near about 3,000 words. Now the learner is capable of making short conversations with classmates. There is a possibility of some grammatical errors. Learner can read simple sentences with the help of trainer.

IV. Intermediate fluency: With the experience of one and a half year now learner is able to speak English fluently. It becomes easy at this stage to use complex sentences. Learner is prompt to express feelings and give opinions. Independent reading of common subject is now possible. Sometimes learners translate written details to native language. The difficulty level of all fore skills is higher than above three levels.

V. Advanced Fluency: To achieve this level rigors practice of all four skills of English language is required for approximately 5-10 years. Learner at this stage can think in English and about to get native speakers ability. Learner requires more support material and frequent guidance from expert trainer. Any computerized programme also can be a great help.

Teaching English as a second language can be easier or more difficult is dependable on how closely learner's mother tongue is related with English. A native speaker of Spanish may find English learning easy compare to a native Indian speaker. Some common problems of ESL in India are syntax error, wrong interpretations of words and improper pronunciation due to mother tongue influence. More over students are used to translate their native language to speak English for Example - 'बड़ाभाई' (Bada bhai) as Big brother. Cultural variety of formal communication also miss guide an ESL learner.

5. ROLE OF LANGUAGE LAB

Teaching English in English speaking countries is comparatively easier than teaching it in other countries. With the advancement of computer technology it remarkably reached to common people. In the preliminary stage computer was used for science and engineering purpose. When it entered to teaching learning process it changed the scenario of education drastically. It made possible to simplify many aspects of language teaching. Teachers can bring out the facts and rules of language to students in an easily graspable manner. It provides education + entertainment means edutainment. Now language teaching is more result oriented. Day by day language lab is getting more and more technological support and delivering more output. If we consider the report of world economic forum technology has changed the scenario of teaching learning process but there is a need of some guidance to handle the technology. Teacher if heaving the facility without any training related to use of IT can't perform well.

"The three reasons that the knowledge base is so limited and scattered are each related to a different piece of the puzzle: inputs, process, and outcomes. The first reason is an overemphasis on access as a key objective of technology policies in education. The second reason derives from the methodological challenges that the investigation of the teaching and learning processes poses, in particular in relation to the role that technology plays in the improvement of student outcomes. The final reason is the poor understanding of what the issue about the effects of technology in education really is and how to address it." By this unit we will try to solve some teaching issues of using language lab for teaching English as a second language. If we discuss its role in teaching English, it can be explained as under.

I. In Teaching LSRW Skills Listening:

A learner speaks what one listen. A child develops one's listening skill according to the surrounding pronunciation. That's why we find different tone and pronunciation in common language. Dialects refer to a term which means various pronunciation of a common according to place. A same word is pronounced differently. Wednesday in pronounced /wɛdnɛzdi/ in American countries and /wɛnzdi/ in British countries. So people speak what they frequently listen to. Most of the English speaking people in India speaks the word 'Bowl' as /bau:l/ 'Potato' as /poteto/ 'Onion' as /onjən/ when its correct pronunciation is chronologically /boʊl /, /pə'tetou/ and /'ɒnjən/.

Lab is foremost useful in teaching listening skill. Listening is the basic skills for language learning. It is a receptive and active skill. Learner receives information via this skill. According to the science this is the only skill which a human start developing before birth. Good listening practice leads to good command on remaining English skills. In traditional language class listening skill is mostly neglected. Sometimes it is avoided due to large number of students or lack of facility. Generally very less importance is given to language skill development while syllabus designing. Even skillful teachers are unable to justify the need of students due to human limitation and less technical support. These limitations can be overcome by the use of language lab.

In lab teaching starts with listening skills. Teacher starts giving instruction in English. Here the number of students is limited as per the number of the computers, mostly thirty to thirty five. In language lab a headphone is connected with each

system which makes the listening process enjoyable and productive. First of all it becomes easier to listen the target language in slow speed. In Lab learner can start with the listening skill by listening simple words and simple sentences. More importantly these audio recording is done by expert so there is no chance of mispronunciation. The expert committee checks every minute detail before software launching and the end user gets the accurately spoken audio. Here it is also possible to listen a same sentence again and again until a learner gets it completely where as in traditional class it is not possible. After basic practice of slow listening learners try to work on listen and compare with picture. Learner listen to a word learner tries to match it with the correct picture. The software also provides audio description for any picture and learner follows the instruction like to underline any object or to write names under certain characters. These activities exposes learner to expanded listening. This stage is very initial stage of listening, so learner is often provided the picture with the audio to have a visual support. This lays a strong foundation to language learning.

• **Proactive Lab Teaching:** Listening skill can be divided mainly in two types

1. Active listening and
2. Passive skill.

In the first one listener is involved in the listening and in second one learner is not attentively listening and at the end one is unaware about many points discussed. Lab forces learners to be active listener. Trainers who are using lab can get optimum result for listening practice by regular listening practice. If we set listening practice in logical order learner can develop one's listening skill faster.

Speaking: It is productive skill as while speaking learner is involved in action and conscious in communication. Language speaking requires mainly two abilities

1. Ability to use language and
2. Ability to pronounce properly.

For the first ability one requires proper knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. For the second, one needs to know phonetics. In traditional class the second most avoided skill is speaking skill. In a class with large number of students, it is very hard to motivate them for spoken practice. Grammar can be practiced while writing but pronunciation can't be practices easily. As we know in English language there many homophones. If it is pronounced incorrectly it may mar the meaning.

Reading: It is an activity with purpose. The purpose can be getting knowledge, to gain information, for time pass, for fun etc. Anything what we read is an encoded message. The reader has to decode it by one's knowledge. This skill is a 'Graphic Motors' skill. Learner uses visual and psychomotor organs. Reading skill is has many verity of its kind. Generally reading is measured in Words per Minute. At early stage WPM is very less and by intense practice it can be developed. Mostly in lab students start reading practice with reading instruction. In any exercise one has to read the instruction and then has to follow. If one fails to read the instruction will fail to follow it. In other way reader reads the instruction then decodes it and after understanding it follows signals sent by the brain. To justify the role of reading and how we read is cleared by Namita Roy in her book English Language Teaching.

"In reading, the major emphasis is on the identification of sound, symbol correspondences so that students perceive in

graphic form, the meanings with which they have become familiar in oral form. Reading is an integrated part of language study, not a specialized activity. Reading helps the student to coordinate their eye movements, to link symbols they are accustomed to hearing to those they see in print, to recognise grammatical units, to learn the spelling of a statement through the signals and symbols used in it.” (Roy 34)

6. CONCLUSION

Many of the students in the districts are from rural areas and their medium of Instruction is not English from the beginning. During student days, the students need to acquire

communication skills as it is essential for them to obtain a professional career. Normally rural areas students from Telugu medium background have apprehension or phobia of learning communication skills. Through ELCS Labs the communication competence can be enhanced by taking certain measures. A few of the problems that rural area students face while acquiring communication skill is that the students have been suffering from negative attitudes towards learning communication skills, lack of interest to learn, lack of motivation, apprehensions about communication, lack of awareness for the need of learning and many other physical and psychological barriers.

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