English language Teaching and Learning through Language Laboratory in Technical Institutes

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Abstract

The ability to communicate effectively has become the prerequisite for anyone who ventures into a new profession; the need for developing communication skills is a much-felt phenomenon today. Both governmental and private institutions are focusing their attention on students developing their communicative skills. As technology has entered into every aspect of human life, it has extended its advanced products into the field of language learning also;

The main objective of the present article is to highlight the importance of language lab in learning communication skills by using advance techniques in   learning process. Language learning is not the same as learning any other subject; it is not confined up to spoken English only. The four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing must have to be practiced and learned well. In which language lab can play an important role. As it is a technological aid for learning, it has a number of advanced facilities that can help students to learn a language with proficiency to communicate.   This article focuses on Concept of language lab, types of laboratory, and how learning through language lab could be easy and interesting,

Changed Approach towards English Teaching and Learning

Global market had opened a numerous of job opportunities for the students with more focus on overall capability apart from the academic competence. Realizing the fact and demand of present the syllabus of English had been modified and restored as per the present requirement. In this new approach (communicative approach) is used through various tasks in theory and lab sessions to develop all the four skills involved in learning a language.

The rapid changes and increased complexity of today's world present new challenges and put new demands on our education system. There has been generally a growing awareness of the necessity to

change and improve the preparation of students for productive functioning in the continually changing and highly demanding environment. A new approach is introduced to teach English in which practical use of English language is emphasized. This approach is called Communicative Approach, as per this approach the main focus is to teach communication to the students. It implies that the English teachers should make the students able to interacting effectively. Therefore, when adopted this approach for teaching English, teachers should mainly concentrate on teaching English as a language of communication and not as a language of literature, it is clearly understood that it is the need of the time to teach English communication rather than prose and poetry. If student doesn't know Tennyson, Wordsworth, Shelley or even Shakespeare will work for them, but they must know how to communicate efficiently and effectively in all forms of communication.

Concept of language Lab

A language lab is an audio/visual aid used in modern teaching and learning process. "It is a recent innovation in the teaching of English language. 'It is just as there are well equipped laboratories for core subjects in Technical Institutes so why can't be language labs? "As it has a great importance in the teaching of English. "It is also technological tool for developing communication skills too.

Language laboratories are being used in various educational institutions in traditional form which consisted of a number of small cabinets, provided with a microphone and a headphone for each one. Teachers use a central control panel to monitor   students' interactions. This technique was actually tedious and boring for learners. Also, there are minimal interactions between teacher and students.

Now a day's Digital Language labs are replacing the conventional labs, The Scientific advancements have produced a number of innovative products to assist the language learning process. These Innovative products are very useful for students learning English. These interactive products are designed to enhance not only language teaching but also make lab sessions more interesting and full of activities. These Hi-tech language labs motivates student's learning attitude by providing an interactive learning environment. As the language lab offers an exclusive result oriented and efficient to enrich the English language learning process. The contribution of technology to language teaching has made teaching of English language more successful, more rapid and more interesting.

Types of Language Laboratory

As there are other kinds of language labs also such as conventional lab , lingua phone but hereby my purpose is to focus on the use of technology in teaching and learning language which not only makes learning interesting and easier for the students.   Hence only two kinds of laboratories are being focused.

- **Computer Assisted Language Laboratory (CALL)**

CALL uses the computer to teach language. The language course materials are already installed in the system and is displayed according to the features available in the system. Nowadays, there are also laboratories with computers connected to the Internet. The movement towards communicative teaching with computers is clearly expanding.

The Computer Assisted Language Laboratory (CALL) focuses on:

• Multimodal practice with feedback,

• Individualization in a large class,

• The computer gives individual attention to the learner and replies to him. Traditionally it acts as a tutor, assessing the learner's reply, recording it, pointing out mistakes, and giving explanations;

• It guides the learner towards the correct answer;

• It offers interactive learning; it can assess the learner's response;

• It can repeat an activity without any of the errors arising from repetition by humans;

•It can handle a very large volume of interaction and can deliver to the student feedback;

- **Multimedia Hi-Tech Language Laboratory**

Multimedia teaching creates a context for language teaching. This method makes the class lively and interesting, as well as optimizing the organization of the class. Multimedia has its own features such as visibility and liveliness. By using multimedia software, teachers can use pictures and images to enrich the content of class. Students in the class can use multimedia to understand the class in a clear way. Through the whole interactive process, it is apparent that using multimedia in ELT is effective in nurturing students' interest in learning English, as well as enhancing teachers'' There is a lot of software available on the market that can be used in the multimedia language laboratory such as :

- Study Skill Success

- Sky Pronunciation Suite

- Tense Buster

- Connected Speech

- Issues in English

- Error Terror

- Business Writing

- It's Your Job

- English Edge

Use of Technology in Language learning

The need of the language laboratory has been much felt in the domain of communication. The language lab helps one to use technology effectively to communicate. It is not merely for learning a single language, but can be used for teaching a number of languages efficiently. To acquire a sensibility for the sounds and rhythm of a language, one has to hear the best samples of a spoken language. This is precisely the function of the language laboratory.

The language laboratory is also very helpful tool for practicing and assessing one's all four communication skills. It provides a facility which allows the student to listen to model pronunciation, repeat and record the same, listen to their performance and compare with the model, and do self-assessment. Since the language laboratory gives every learner freedom to learn at their own pace. Students who hesitate to communicate in front of other can also take advantage of it. It is also possible for teachers to provide assistance individually and collectively to the students.

Learning Through Language Lab,

According to Prof. R.N. Khanal "in language labs students can have real exposure to the communication. They will really be involved in learning the techniques of communication with the use of their basic level of English language. The teacher can play the role of facilitator then."

Before moving on to the advantages of language lab it is to be made clear that a language laboratory is a teaching tool and should not be seen either as substitute of a teacher or a teaching method ; on the contrary language lab requires better prepared teachers who can put the new equipment's and techniques to the best use . For that teachers are expected to have some knowledge of complex hardware and software. It is true that number of teachers is very few who are using 'cutting edge' technology; the majority of teachers are still teaching in traditional manners. None of these traditional manners are bad or doing any kind of damage to the students. In fact, till date they are proving to be useful but the importance of language lab cannot be undermine as the effectiveness of the language lab mainly depends on the teacher's creativity and on the software used in lab. In order to derive desired results a computer requires advance and sophisticated software.

Language laboratory is very useful for assessing student's correct and accurate performance. It provides students with the technical tools to get the best samples of pronunciation of the language. The writing process is another area where computer assisted language lab have added a great deal of value. Some programs help students in the pre-writing stage to generate and outline ideas. Most word-processors now come with spelling and grammatical errors checkers, giving poor spellers some help in finding their errors and recognizing the correct spelling from a list of options. The electronic devices used in the laboratory stimulate the eyes and ears of the learner to acquire the language quickly and easily. The laboratory's collection is designed to assist learners in the acquisition and maintenance of aural comprehension, oral and written proficiency, and cultural awareness.

The main activities conducted in these labs are introduction and greetings, Role –plays, Group Discussions/brain storming, Interview techniques, Debates, Public Speaking and language games. The learners are shown recorded programs and English motivational pictures; such activities are very helpful in learning communication skills as well as in personality development and handling formal /informal situations with confidence and ease.

Below mentioned are the areas on which students can work on during the lab sessions:

- English speech sounds, Word stress and rhyme

- Body language / Nonverbal behaviour (facial expression, voice pitch, voice modulation, articulation,)
- Listening /Reading comprehensions
- Group Discussions, Debate
- Pictionary (information gap activity)
- Movie review, News Review
- Interview skills
- Creative writing

CONCLUSION

 Language laboratory is tremendously helpful in creating favorable atmosphere for language learning and helping the learners to acquire necessary language skills useful to them in sharpening their study at present and streamlining their research and innovative activities in their further studies in the future.

Summing up, language lab is the ultimate solution and need of an hour in learning English language. The quality of the language proficiency will be more when learners learn it from the advance technology. Surely language laboratories represent the single largest investment and instalment of audio resources in education. By high merit of its unique equipment and its unambiguous pedagogy, it stands alone. A contribution of technology to language teaching has made teaching of English language more successful, more rapid and more interesting.

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