

IMPORTANCE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS LABORATORY FOR IMPROVING COMMUNICATION SKILLS AT UNDERGRADUATE LEVEL

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ABSTRACT

As our rural and urban students have little exposure to communication skills, their performance in Under Graduate level examinations (that is in Engineering and various courses of Graduation) and interviews is practically very low. 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 mothertongue influence. To meet the global standards in English proficiency and to gain employability skills the Engineering colleges from 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.

Key Words: *Communication Skills, Millennium Learners, Fluency, Proficiency, Innovative Teaching and Learning Methods*

I 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 highlight 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.

II IMPORTANCE OF LANGUAGE LAB

Language is the medium of communication. Communication implies carrying of message or receiving of message. The students of various cultures, it means rural and urban students feel it hard to learn English proficiently as English is a second language for both of them. The language lab is a technological break for imparting skills in English. The English language lab offers an exclusive result orientation and is effective to enrich the English language learning process. The quality of the language proficiency will be more when they learn it from the multimedia, digital and computerized language lab as in the present century English has gained a prominent position. It is compulsorily used in all most all fields of study. English language enables people to know what's happening in and around the world.

The Language Laboratory is an audio-visual installation used in modern teaching methods to learn the foreign languages. The language lab is developed on the methodology of Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing (LSRW) skills. The language lab provides a rich environment to learn the language and a new outlook for the students to support themselves at the onset.

The language lab plays a key role to learn the foreign language in a pleasant and comfortable environment and in a successful way. Both the students and the teacher's inputs are very important in this two-way kind of learning activity. The computers are just an aid but not a solution. Learners must learn the language very quickly through the language learning lab and should believe it as self-learning accessible kit.

The language lab plays a pivotal role in learning the basic proficiency in spoken English and is imparted to students through language lab. The computers now fulfill all the needs of language teachers and give life through language for many learners. Apart from spoken English the students can set themselves their Soft skills and also prepare them for the corporate skills through this exclusive language learning labs.

III IMPLEMENTATION OF LANGUAGE LAB IN RURAL AND URBAN U.G. COLLEGES

In the present days communication skills are the soul of one's existence. Nowadays the students from urban areas have shown better performance in their exams or during their interviews. There are many instances where most of the rural students have failed to express themselves. Rural students have poor communication skills, so also their performance in interviews is not up to the mark. Present day urban students have internet facility, so they can improve their communication skills through the internet, audio and video. Even urban area's college's have good language laboratories. At this, present day students are improving their communication skills through language labs. It will help the learners to develop the skills in English. In rural areas the students are facing many problems due to non-availability of power, inadequate infrastructure and computers to gain communication skills at U.G. level. At present language learning laboratories and digital labs are playing their role in most of the colleges. Students terminals and headphones are equipped today by all the major manufacturers and they say that they have a 'digital' or a 'just software' solution. However, in many cases they still depend on proprietary networks or on expensive sound cords to successfully deliver their media. There are very few true software's that just rely on installing designated language lab software onto a network and then directing just the original network to manage the media between teacher and student, student and student or student back to teacher. In the past the quality of school or university networks may have meant much.

The principle of a language learning lab has not changed. It's still a teacher controlled system to a number of student booths containing a student's control mechanism and a head set with a microphone. Digital language labs have the same principle. The software only changes the concept of language learning. Software can be installed and accessed on any network PC, anywhere in a school, college or university campus. Software-only systems can be located in one room from room-to-room or campus to campus.

IV 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.

4.1 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.

4.2 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.

4.3 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)

4.4 Utilization of Language Learning Laboratory

English labs are made compulsory for U.G. 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.

V COMPUTER ENABLES READING AND LISTENING SKILLS

It gives the ability to understand the problems while learning through computers and seeking clarification from reliable sources. While learning the learners are expected to prepare notes in order to excel in future endeavors. To consider interactive lab as an essential component that provides ample opportunities for learners with great exposure for participating in the activities to develop communication skills in both individual and groups.

VI 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 area 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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