



Introducing Language Lab for Teaching of English in India

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ABSTRACT:

The inadequate exposure of both rural and urban students of India to effective communication skills has resulted in suboptimal academic performance in their respective undergraduate examinations and interviews. Our current challenge pertains to the remarkable technical prowess of individuals with limited proficiency in the English language. On the contrary, the employment prospects accessible to them require and assess the extent of the students' proficiency in the English language. It is imperative that we initiate the incorporation of advanced technological tools in the classrooms to facilitate the acquisition of knowledge by students hailing from both urban and rural settings. This ought to be supplemented by implementation of innovative pedagogical approaches. Similarly, a noteworthy hurdle that persists is the prevalence of mother tongue influence on the English language communication skills of urban students. In order to conform to international benchmarks of English language proficiency and to acquire skills that enhance employability, engineering institutions have been furnished with specialized language laboratories for over a decade and a half. At present, it is highlighted in this article that both urban and rural students have the potential to enhance their communication and employability skills by utilizing language laboratories in both independent and interactive ways. This discussion underscores the role of the instructor as a facilitator in utilizing available technical resources and incorporating learner-centered activities in the teaching of English as a second language. Such practices are expected to enhance the overall learning experience for the contemporary generation of students.

Key words: communication skills, fluency, proficiency, innovative teaching and learning methods.

I. Introduction:

Effective communication abilities are essential for triumph in any academic or vocational

pursuit. The regular practice of the four essential language skills, namely reading, writing, listening, and speaking, is imperative. Due to our reliance on technological assistance for the intensive study of the aforementioned four domains, there exist several sophisticated resources which can enhance a student's mastery of the English language, particularly in terms of communicative competence. The present scholarly work endeavors to underscore the importance of a language laboratory and the attendant difficulties which it poses to both students and educators. The English language laboratory stands out as an exceptional infrastructural resource that is currently available to undergraduate students. It was appropriately postulated that the incorporation of a language laboratory is an imperative component for the instruction of a foreign language, specifically English. The primary objective and vision of our institution is to dedicate ourselves towards ensuring that students possess indispensable proficiency and effectiveness in spoken and written English as a prerequisite for achieving career success in the contemporary globalized world. The English language laboratory has been extensively utilized since its inception, offering expert facilities to a vast number of students from all faculties and departments, regardless of their chosen field of study. It is imperative to note that the technical advantages offered by the English language laboratory are effectively utilized by students, who are under the diligent supervision and guidance of several skilled instructors.

Every educational system delineates specific objectives that seek to facilitate the development of desirable modifications in the student. To facilitate the desired transformations, the institutions curate learning opportunities. The efficacy of the learning process can be gauged solely by the alterations instigated as a result of this encounter. The present undertaking is indicative of a pedagogical and evaluative endeavor. The emergence of English as a globally recognized language has led to an escalated demand for its instruction as either a second or foreign language, across the world.



Necessity of English Language Skills:

English was introduced in India during the British colonial era, consequently rendering it not only a foreign language but also one that was highly despised. English has undergone a transformative evolution in its usage and societal perception. Initially wielded as a tool of subjugation, it later garnered acceptance as a commonly used international communication mode. Despite being initially relegated to the domain of the elite, it has presently assumed the status of a secondary language. Indeed, it would not be incongruous to assign the classification of a primary language to certain demographic strata within the Indian population. The status of the language experienced a continual process of transformation, and similarly, the entire paradigm of English language teaching underwent a comprehensive range of modifications. During the concluding years of the twentieth century, as English gained momentum as a worldwide language, the educational setting in India underwent a significant transformation as a result of changes in the learner's surroundings. While the previous environs were deficient in English acquisition, there was a sudden proliferation of individuals actively engaging in learning the English language, thus indicating a shift in language use tendencies.

The liberalization of the Indian economy introduced numerous incentives for individuals to acquire linguistic proficiency. In previous decades, individuals with a specialization in English primarily pursued careers within the educational or administrative sectors. However, contemporary developments have introduced a broader range of vocational prospects. In contemporary times, the existence of call centres has resulted in a demand for trainers to capacitate their personnel with effective communication skills. Furthermore, multinational companies have undertaken recruitment initiatives for the purpose of procuring staff for marketing roles that require the acquisition of spoken English skills through training. In addition, medical transcription facilities have a requisite need for competent translators and reporters. Individuals aspiring for immigration to the Western hemisphere sought the professional assistance required to clear standardized examinations such as the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). As such, the domains necessitating the implementation of English Language Teaching (ELT) in India are myriad in contemporary times.

The pedagogy of English language has been incorporated in the curriculum of educational institutions for several decades. "It assumes the status of a secondary official language." It is frequently

employed as a lingua franca within professional settings and among individuals possessing a higher level of education. English language instruction is considered mandatory at the educational levels of primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions. Moreover, English serves as a prevalent medium of instruction. The linguistics utilized in the field of science and technology is deemed imperative for the comprehension and accurate communication of technical information. It holds the status of a secondary language in the academic curriculum and is deemed necessary for advanced education. The English language has been designated as the primary library language. The present-day status of English in India is characterized by its widespread usage as a second language across all levels of education, reflecting a considerable emphasis on English language instruction.

Effective Language Lab:

Avery et.al. assert that the current educational provisions for teachers are formulated to offer effective guidance to E-S-L instructors in acquiring the skills of pronunciation. These resources differ from previous materials due to their heightened focus on super segmental features of speech, including rhythm, intonation, and stress, which are deemed crucial for effective communication. Numerous novel educational resources designed for utilization in academic settings convey a heightened emphasis on supra-segmental elements, as explicated by Jones in 1997. However, despite attempts to integrate more communicative activities into these materials, the majority of pronunciation aids continue to showcase a pronounced audio-lingual orientation. Second language learners have the capability to adapt their pronunciation to comply with the accent that is comprehensible to native speakers, whereby this skill largely enhances the level of intelligibility in their speech production.

Usage of the Language Lab:

The utilization of a language laboratory, in tandem with both a teacher's console and language learning software, presents a viable means for the acquisition of accurate pronunciation. The aforementioned platform presents an opportunity for individuals to engage in interactive language lessons geared towards improving their pronunciation skills in a communicative manner, thereby allowing them to progress at their own pace. The language laboratory can potentially encompass various objectives, aims, and functions to effectively operate. The main objectives are:



- To make good linguistics competence through accuracy in pronunciation.
- To enrich the discourse competence so as to prepare learner to able to produce contextualize and clear speech.
- To acquire strategies competence for spoken language to use in a wide range of communication strategies.

Learning Correct Articulation:

A proposal is presented for the implementation of audio and video broadcasting in order to facilitate the provision of live video and audio content from educational channels available on Television or the Internet. Additionally, the said broadcasting shall enable the transmission of audio and video from any analogue source, such as DVD, MP3, or CD.

Speech Drill:

The act of engaging in voice-based exercises, such as speech drills utilizing model replication, vocal recording, voice graph analysis, and the utilization of variable speed playback, can effectively mitigate accentuation and foster heightened language fluency.

Group Discussion:

In order to facilitate group discussions and role-playing activities from their respective workstations, it is necessary to assign learners to randomized groups. Additionally, it is recommended that each group's discussion content be recorded separately in order to enable teachers to provide performance feedback.

Computer Assisted Instructions:

The utilization of technology represents a pedagogical approach known as labs assisted language learning (LALL). Utilizing technology in laboratories for pronunciation assistance pertains to the analysis of both segmental and supra-segmental elements of the sound system. Rostron and Kinsell assert that digitized speech can enhance language pronunciation. The utilization of L-A-P as a pedagogical tool to impart pronunciation skills has been undertaken in order to fulfill two key objectives: firstly, to identify any aberrations in the students' pronunciation, and secondly, to aid the student in the remediation of these identified deviations.

The elucidation and pedagogy of diverse components of phonetics, notably intonation in linguistics and instruction of various aspects of pronunciation, are facilitated through LAP's

assortment of interactive software packages. Such a comprehensive array of resources empowers learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) to effectively perceive and proficiently exercise various aspects of pronunciation. The utilization of laboratory-assisted techniques in pronunciation interaction is associated with several advantages that are typically absent in traditional contexts. There exists a phenomenon that transcends the boundaries of formal educational settings, affording learners with increased autonomy and control over the development of their training techniques, particularly in the domain of LZ pronunciation.

Functionality of LL:

The levels of functionality of current language labs vary from manufacturer to manufacturer. All labs will have a level of teacher control to manage students' licenses/ desktop. The more sophisticated 'software only' labs have a higher level of teacher management and control over the student desktop. One of the key differences with the 'high end', 'software only' products is their ability to work 'live' with the students as they record and work with media. So instead of waiting to correct student recordings after they have been recorded and collected back it is now possible for a teacher to work synchronously and live with students on their own, in pairs and in groups. Thus in enhancing the immediacy of the teaching and learning experience the next generation digital language labs allow teachers to monitor, control, deliver, group, display, review and collect, audio, video and web based multimedia content. The student player is linked to the teacher console and can play audio, video and web based formats. Student can rewind, stop, start, and go back to last silence, record, fast, forwards, repeat, phrase and bookmark.

Software packages in language lab (SPLL) are basically learner centred materials. This is having open, distance and flexible for learner and have to learn on their own, at a time, pace and place of their own choice. They are different from other learning materials. The different forms of self-learning materials and digital books, worksheets, digitalised audio lessons, digitalised video lessons, web based packages, variety of software packages for phonetics and grammar, etc., although a student may be responding to the material that is presented, they do not receive immediate information about the correctness of his response nor is the able to proceed at his own rate. The investigator keeps all these in mind and selected the effectiveness of language laboratory in learning English for this present study.



Phonology:

The phonetic and phonological characteristics of the English language vary across different dialects, typically without impeding inter-dialect communication. Phonological variation has an impact on the phoneme inventory, which pertains to speech sounds that serve to differentiate meanings. On the other hand, phonetic variation refers to variations in the way that phonemes are articulated. This briefing primarily delineates the conventional enunciation of the United Kingdom and the United States, namely, Received Pronunciation (RP) and General American (GA).

English dialects commonly exhibit a set of 24 consonantal phonemes, while the pronunciation of vowels manifests significant variation across dialects and is recognized as a prominent feature of a speaker's accent. Typically, an English syllable comprises a syllable nucleus consisting of a vowel sound. The phenomenon of stress holds a significant position within the context of English language as it involves the deliberate emphasis or de-emphasis on particular syllables. The phenomenon of stress is comprised of various factors such as duration, intensity, quality of the vowel, and occasionally, alterations in pitch. The phenomenon of lengthening and increasing vocal intensity in stressed syllables compared to their unstressed counterparts is a salient feature of English pronunciation. Additionally, vowels in stressed syllables tend to retain their full phonetic quality, whereas those in unstressed syllables are often subject to reduction. Certain words, mostly consisting of brief function words and certain modal verbs like "can," possess weak and strong forms that are dependent on their occurrence in either stressed or non-stressed positions within a sentence. This phenomenon underscores the nuanced phonetic intricacies of language.

Proficiency Tests:

According to Oller and Damico, language proficiency tests are linked to three distinct schools of thought. One of the emerging trends in the study of language proficiency, known as the discrete point approach, is founded on the premise that language proficiency can be deconstructed into distinct components such as phonology, lexicon, syntax, among others. Each of these components may be further subdivided into discrete inventories of elements, such as sounds, classes of sounds, phonemes, syllables, morphemes, words, idioms, phrase structures, and so on. An examination of discrete point language proficiency typically employs evaluation formats, such as phoneme discrimination tasks, in which the examinee is

mandated to distinguish whether two aurally presented words are identical or distinct. An analogous illustration can be cited in the form of a vocabulary assessment examination that mandates the examinee to choose the correct response from a predetermined inventory of options.

II. Conclusion:

The language laboratory is an instrumental tool in cultivating an advantageous milieu for language acquisition and facilitating the acquisition of essential language skills that are beneficial for enhancing the present academic pursuits and refining the research and inventive endeavors in future academic undertakings.

In conclusion, the language laboratory represents a paramount and timely solution for the acquisition of English language skills. The level of language proficiency among learners will improve to a greater extent when instructed through advanced technological means. Language laboratories are perceived as the foremost investment and installation of audio resources within the realm of education. Due to its exceptional equipment and clear pedagogical approach, it stands out significantly. The integration of technology into language education has significantly enhanced the effectiveness, expedience, and engagement of the English language teaching process.

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