

Innovative Practices of Language Teaching by setting up Language Laboratories

Dr. Nira Konar, HOD, Humanities and Associate Professor of English, Department of Humanities, College of Engineering and Management, Kolaghat, West Bengal, India.

nirakonar@cemk.ac.in

Abstract: Innovation is a must to survive the growing challenges in all fields, especially in the fields of Education. With the rapid spread of worldwide trade, commerce and technological development in the modern world, the importance of English language teaching and learning has grown exponentially. Good communication skills in English remains a key factor in succeeding in today's global market. This paper offers to throw light on the Innovative use of Language Laboratories for Effective Communication in English in the Techno-Commercial world.

Keywords — *Language Laboratory; Language Learning Softwares; Audio-Video resources, Simulation of Group Discussions and Interviews; Global Managers.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The English language has long established itself as the language of trade, commerce and higher Education. With the revolutionary development in the software industry the use of English as the language of internet connectivity throughout the world has been firmly established [1]. Students, especially in countries like India, can write well but often have hesitation in speaking. As an academician, as well as being a Language Lab resource developer, the undersigned has made a close study of the development of Language Laboratories in the field of ELT i.e. English Language Teaching.

II. THE PRESSING NEED FOR INNOVATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING THROUGH LANGUAGE LABORATORIES

What has perplexed this researcher is the question as to why it is that our students who can write beautiful answers on William Wordsworth's Daffodils in their board examinations, are so hesitant to speak in English in social and professional meetings? Why this lack of confidence about their body language or their hesitation regarding their speech in English? [2]. Perhaps, the answer lies in the fact that often enough students memorise answers and write well. On the other hand, the learner may not get enough practice in the traditional classrooms to speak fluently or even get to listen to the extensive use of the English and other languages which may not be their mother tongue.

One could also agree, that active listening very much helps the listener to pick up the language, and it helps in developing more confident speech in the target language. So for all these reasons, it might be useful to have a dedicated space outside the traditional chalk and talk

physical classroom, and therefore set up a Language Laboratory [3]. The role of the Language Lab is therefore of prime importance

III. THE ORIGIN OF LANGUAGE LABORATORIES

In the United States, and in a few of the other Western countries, the language labs have been in vogue especially after the Second World War, when the US army had tried to interact and train people in the English language [4]. At the primary level what was carried out were oral practice sessions in English words in order to drill in the words and accents. With time, the concept and practices of language labs spread in many parts of the world.

IV. WHY ARE MORE AND MORE STUDENTS TRYING TO LEARN ENGLISH IN THE LANGUAGE LABS

Nowadays, Language laboratories are used to teach foreign languages like Japanese, German, Russian or any other language that can be needed, especially for jobs involving overseas clients. In countries like India, Malaysia, Singapore, and even in other countries around the globe where students aspire to learn English for getting jobs, Language Labs are used primarily for teaching English language skills.

V. THE EARLY LANGUAGE LABORATORIES IN INDIA

Earlier, there were makeshift labs in India from the end of the 20th century with only a computer, cassette recorder, microphone and headphones. A few renowned institutions like 'Central Institute of English and other Foreign

Languages' i.e. CIEFL, (now known as 'English and Other Foreign Languages' i.e. EFLU) and the IIT's, particularly IIT, Kharagpur, had Language Labs. Even then, these labs were in their earlier stages Analog labs and it is much later on that they became full- fledged Digital labs.

Gradually at the turn of the 21st century in India, more and more institutions started setting up Language Laboratories, and nowadays AICTE has made it a basic requirement for all the technical institutions under it.

VI. PRESSING NEED FOR HAVING LANGUAGE LABS IN OUR COUNTRY

More and more Indians are learning English, since it is not only the language of trade and commerce, but also the link language within India, and also the language for communication throughout the globe. English is also the language of higher education, and both the English language skills and the requisite soft skills have become important factors for almost all the white collar jobs. It is specially so for the software Engineers, many of whom are from India and the subcontinent, and are employed in great numbers by the tech giants of the US based companies.

Even those students who are simply trying to get jobs at call centres, or the hospitality industry, need to pick up the proper accents and requisite speech patterns, and the language learning lab is the place where through multimedia tools, the young aspirant for a job not only gets a grounding into the basics of good communication, but also learns about the rich, complex and often confusing cultural base of language learning.

VII. COMPONENTS OF LANGUAGE LABS

What are the basic requisites of setting up a Language Laboratory?

The Conventional Language Labs had a tape-recorder and audio-cassettes. The teacher would play the recorded cassettes on Stress and Intonations of English teaching cassettes of CIEFL, or of those available in the British Councils, and the students would listen to it and repeat the Stress patterns and follow the English accents. Most of this learning involved mechanical drills, and the stress was on Phonetics [5].

The Lingua-phone labs are also traditional labs, but here the students get headsets, and listen to the recording through audio systems. The students can also get to record their speeches, which they can later rewind and listen to.

VIII. COMPUTER ASSISTED LANGUAGE LABS

Here with the help of a central console the teacher, who

is a facilitator in the learning process, teaches the students who are seated in their student consoles. The teaching material is assigned by the teacher into the computer or laptop at the central console.

IX. MOBILE OR PORTABLE LABS

These labs can be moved about from location to location and this definitely has its advantages, yet it takes a lot of time in setting up and in resetting. In all cases, for any kind of Language lab to be effective the acoustics has to be good. The software should be of the upgraded kind and the computers too need to be connected to the LAN ie to the Local Area Network. The systems are connected through the LAN and the teacher can use the software and send the assigned materials to the students. The other requirements in the lab would be Headphones with integrated Microphones; LCD projector, Handycam, or Camcorder, a white screen and DVDs, CDs.

X. USE OF SOFTWARE

Many different language teaching softwares are available in the market. We can for instance refer to the widely used Orell Integrated software for E-Learning and Online Examinations.

The material that is available along with these softwares is pre-recorded, but there is scope for creation of new materials through the Lesson studios integrated in such softwares [4]. The teacher can encourage the students to be collaborators in the creation of such created material.

Finally, it can be said that there has been a paradigm shift in innovative use of language teaching and training and the Language Laboratory is playing a key role in it.

XI. PARADIGM SHIFT IN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

Far removed from the chalk and talk teaching in the classrooms or even far removed from the mechanical oral drills in the earlier language teaching classrooms and labs, the modern Language Labs have seen a paradigm shift in Language teaching and learning. The language Laboratory should be a self accessed learning facility centre, as well as a centre for teacher enabled self learning; peer learning; machine aided learning. It should also enable the learning facilitator to enable the learner for self evaluation; peer evaluation; machine aided evaluation. The material used for teaching is often graded material and as the learner progresses in his learning graph, he can be allotted lessons involving greater learning skills and involving higher levels of understanding and performance. For instance, materials used may have of Stage 1; Stage 2; Stage 3 levels, for preparation of many competitive English Examinations for cracking interviews for higher studies abroad, or for even clearing the initial stages of the aptitude tests for jobs. This kind of

training is specially needed for software related jobs in MNC's where along with a very good grounding in computers, fluency in English, as well as a flair for soft skills is imperative. With increased competitiveness in the job market, Innovative teaching in Language Labs have become imperative in the academic institutions; and it is even to be found for training purposes in the corporate offices.

REFERENCES

- [1] E.W. Bagster, Collins, *Studies in Modern Language Teaching*. New York: Macmillan, 1990.
- [2] Konar. N, *Communication Skills for Professionals*.
New Delhi:PHI, 3rd Edition, 2022 p. 7
- [3] Konar. N., *English Language Laboratories: a Complete Manual*. New Delhi:PHI, 2011.
- [4] Petrson. P. "Origins of the Language Laboratory". *NALLD Journal*, 8(4), 1974, pp. 5-17.
- [5] AI Hmound, "The Effectiveness of Using English Lab on English Language Student's Pronunciation," *Journal of Scientific Research*, 1, 2014, pp. 84-94.

