

Technology-Integrated Language Teaching

G. Vijay, M.A., M.Phil.

=====
Abstract

Equipping the English Language Lab is an essential task of all Engineering Colleges and Universities today. Some colleges are ready to spend generously for buying high-tech systems with all advanced features whereas there are many institutions that cannot afford to buy such facilities. An English teacher with a basic knowledge on computer and Internet can bring out his/her own software for the language Lab. Many readymade language labs bring out the contents that are strange and irrelevant to the needs of the students. Only a teacher who has direct access to the students will know and understand the needs of the students and accordingly he/she will be able to bring out the materials for learning. External curriculum designers can never be successful in meeting the needs of the learners fully. They may bring revolutions in the teaching methodology but they may not be fulfilling the expectations of the learners.

This paper guides the language teachers in making simple and portable software for their English Language Lab. The teachers need not buy extra resources. They can make use of available sources like PowerPoint and can do wonders in the class. They can create audio/video lessons, interactive quiz, slide shows, etc. This paper gives details on making audio/ video lessons using PowerPoint.

Key words: Language labs, engineering colleges, teacher-prepared learning materials, PowerPoint presentation

Introduction

With the introduction of technology, the teaching industry has been experiencing immense changes. Such changes are appreciated by the 21st century students who are no more bookish and conservative. Language instructors in higher education found that the current generation of students is coming to campus with quite sophisticated technical skills and

habits. Many are fully conversant with and committed to communicating through social networking sites. (Robert Godwin, 2009). The foremost objective of the educational institutions is to facilitate a realistic learning environment for their students. Universities have insisted that their aided colleges setup language laboratories for bringing up a virtual language learning setup.

Today's world is a multilingual and multicultural world which has been reduced to the size of a village with the help of science and technology. As the world has become a village, one common language has been used for all kinds of its business transactions. English is acceptable to most individual as a common platform for executing all private and public business in his/her life. As the world has got changed, it is the bounden duty of the academic institutions to transform themselves to meet the demands of the pace of the world. Following traditional methods will never help the students of a nation to cope up with the needs of the world. In this situation, introducing language laboratory has become mandatory for all educational institutions. Benefits of the language lab are plenty. The language laboratory helps the learners use technology to communicate effectively. It is not only used for learning a single language, but also 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 (Richards, 2001).

Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL)

CALL is the acronym for computer assisted language learning. The concept of CALL began in the 1960s. Since then, the development of CALL has followed the changes in teaching methodologies like audio-lingual and communicative approach (Hah M.1996). Communicative approaches to language learning emphasize the significance of linking language learning and use of computer technologies. The classroom should be a portal where students learn lessons that are infused with various activities that motivate them. This will make students hopeful that classroom lessons will help them in learning the language quickly. However, it is impossible to bring exciting learning environment in the regular classroom. Teachers have to rely on computer technology.

Though using computers is fascinating, it is not easy to make computers available for the use of all the students, since it needs a lot of sources and manpower. There is some

difficulty in defining CALL because it does not include simply the desktop and laptop devices. It also includes the networks connecting them, peripheral devices associated with them and a number of other technological innovations such as PDAs (personal digital assistants), mp3 players, mobile phones, electronic whiteboards and even DVD players (Levy, M. and Hubbard, P. 2005).

Benefits of English Language Laboratory

Language lab helps students in learning the language in all possible ways through its varied and quick activities that can never be imagined in the regular classrooms that are facilitated just with blackboard and chalk pieces. In a regular classroom, only one teacher performs for forty students while language lab functions with the staff-student ratio of 1:1. Each student gets an individual computer to assist in his/her learning. The teaching resources can be stored for a long time and shared with other teachers and students. The big difference between computers and teachers is that computers will never get tired and can repeat the same thing again and again without complaint (Ali Farhan AbuSeileek, Atef Odeh Abu Sa'aleek, 2012).

Language lab helps students in the following ways by providing students a comfortable learning environment.

1. Develop Listening Skills:

Language lab helps learners acquire good listening skills by giving clear-cut exposure to the correct language patterns with the aid of headsets. Articulation of sounds is visually explained through animations. When students listen to the audio message, they become closer to the manner of articulation. It is just like the difference between watching a movie in the theatre and watching the movie in one's laptop with a headset. Watching a movie in the laptop with a headset will help the viewers have a closer and better experience of the movie. Similarly, language lab also provides the students with a close-up experience in learning.

2. Opportunity to Perform and Self-learning

Computers can entertain and motivate students. It encourages students of all levels to participate in the learning process whereas in the regular classroom teaching, only active students will perform. Language teaching in the past mainly facilitated passive learning with the help of chalk, blackboard, recorders and video players. After the arrival of computers, teachers have an opportunity of presenting pictures, videos, and written texts mixed with sound patterns. Students enjoy this virtual and understandable learning environment. Softwares also help them in spotting out their errors then and there and facilitate self-learning.

3. Free from Fear

In spite of the globalized set up in all parameters of life, academic learning is taking place only with fear for the teacher. Students are reluctant to express themselves free in front of the teacher. When the teacher tries to look at the writings of the students during the dictation class, they will immediately try to hide their writings from the eyes of the teacher. This simple action is enough for portraying how strange the relationship is between a teacher and the student. However, in language lab, students may be free from the direct control of the teacher and they learn at ease without any inhibition or fear.

Reality of Language Lab Software

Many outsourcing agencies are available to install language lab software. The institutions may buy a certain number of user rights. The cost of the program varies depending on the variety of exercises and options included in the software. Some institutions fail to scrutinize whether the products are parallel to the needs of their students. Moreover, poor knowledge on computer and technology among the faculty members of English may not help them to choose the right software and technology. After installation they may feel that the software is unexciting and outmoded. Updating the same package demands another volume of money and so the institution will lose interest in updating it. Hence, to escape from the costly trap laid by software developing agencies, the teachers of English should come forward to learn at least the basic sources like Microsoft.Office, PowerPoint, etc. They can do wonders with these programmes.

Video Lessons with PowerPoint Presentations

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 15:4 April 2015

G. Vijay, M.A., M.Phil.

Technology-Integrated Language Teaching

Everyone is aware that Microsoft PowerPoint is meant for making presentations. Many do not know that they can prepare audio/video lessons. The job is done easily by inserting audio/video clips in the slides and converting them into html file which itself become a software.

The methods of preparing video lessons with MS.PowerPoint software are as follows.

1. Download Ispring Powerpoint to flash and HTML5 converter and install the same in a computer.
2. When a PowerPoint page is opened, an icon named “ispring 7” can be found at the top of the page.
3. Select a video clip and convert it into a flash format.
4. Now open the Power Point page and click “Flash”.
5. In the following slides, add questions that are to be answered by the students in accordance to the video clip that is added.
6. Press publish icon and choose the destination where the published file is to be saved.
7. Now the video lesson is ready.

Audio lessons with PowerPoint

The following instructions will help in preparing audio lessons.

1. Open a new file in PowerPoint.
2. Click insert menu and choose “movies and sounds” from which choose “insert sound from file.”
3. Choose an audio file from the destination folder that is kept in one of the drives of your computer.

4. It will display a speaker icon and also a dialog box that asks “how to start the sound in the slideshow” with answering options like ‘automatically” and “when clicked”
5. Choose “when clicked” or “automatically” depending up on the type of your lesson and press the button Ctrl + S to save the file.
6. Click the file menu and choose “save as webpage”. It will display another box in which you can name the file as you wish and select the destination to which the file is to be saved and finally press “publish.”
7. Audio lesson is ready at hand.

The created file is portable and can be used in language lab by all students. To open the file, Adobe flash player 6 or 8 should be installed in all computers or Internet browser like IE8 or Google Chrome is essential but Internet connection is not needed. Using this methodology, teachers can prepare audio/video lessons like listening comprehension, listening and reading stories, etc.

Conclusion

This idea was conceived in the mind of the author to assist the institutions which do not have technical persons and much monetary resources. Teachers in such institutions may create their own sources of teaching through easily available technologies. Microsoft Office is one such source that is available at hand and can be easily used for making audio/video lessons. The materials developed through this method may look simple and less fashionable but they will cheer up the teachers with the spirit of success, achievement and gratification since their handmade materials are used by their students. In reality, the teachers are not the curriculum or syllabus designers. Some committee plans and designs these and the syllabus document offers guidelines (which usually are not very clear and explicit). The teachers are required to follow them to achieve the academic targets. There are also several free softwares available in the Internet and teachers should spend some time to bring out their own contributions for the benefit of their students and other learners.

=====

Works Cited

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 15:4 April 2015

G. Vijay, M.A., M.Phil.

Technology-Integrated Language Teaching

Ali Farhan AbuSeileek, Atef Odeh Abu Sa'aleek, (2012). "Computer Assisted Language Learning: Merits and Demerits." *LANGUAGE IN INDIA*, www.languageinindia.com, Volume 12 : 4 April 2012.

Babu, Ramesh .(2010) <http://www.elweekly.com/elt-newsletter/2010/05/59-article>

Levy, M. and Hubbard, P. 'Why call CALL CALL?' (Editorial), *Computer Assisted Language Learning* 18(3): 143–9, 2005.

Godwin, Robert. (2009), "Language Learning & Technology." <http://ilt.msu.edu/vol13num2/emerging.pdf>

Rajamani, K (2008). "Communication Skills Laboratory in Engineering Colleges" *Language in India* www.languageinindia.com, Vol-8, ISSN-1930-2940.

Richards, J. (2001). "Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching." Cambridge: CUP.

Shermila Joycilin. (2009). "Language Teaching in Multimedia Language Lab" *Language in India* www.languageinindia.com. Presented in the All-India Conference on Multimedia Enhanced Language Teaching – MELT 2009. Volume 9 ISSN 1930-2940.

=====
G. Vijay, M.A., M.Phil.
Assistant Professor
Department of English
PSNA College of Engineering and Technology
Dindigul-624622
Tamilnadu
India
rgvijayac@gmail.com