

Life Skills through English Language Laboratory in Educational Institutions of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh

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Abstract

The extensive use of preinstalled programmes has been reducing the teaching role in an English language laboratory. A few programmes have the flexibility to modify the questions according to the need of the students in order to achieve the aims and objectives of the language laboratory. English language laboratory can function as a Spoken English Centre because laboratory is meant for language tutorials to the students who cannot perform well along with other students. Actually, these are to be attended by students who voluntarily opt for remedial English classes, but all students are enrolled to attend. Lessons and exercises are being recorded on a weekly basis so that the students are exposed to a variety of listening and speaking drills. The separation of the classes has not been taking place according to the level of competence the students have. The language laboratory especially benefits students who are deficient in English and also aims at confidence-building for interviews and competitive examinations. The language laboratory sessions also need to include more word games, quizzes, debates and skits, etc., but the objectives of the competitive examinations have been missing in the language lab curriculum. There is scope for identifying methods to strengthen the English language laboratories as equivalent time of regular classes is being spent in a laboratory.

Keywords: language laboratory, pre-installation of programmes, insufficient programmes, modern needs of the language use, life skills, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh schools

Introduction

Most of the modern established universities, colleges and schools are equipped with language laboratories. Though it is very expensive to establish language laboratories, providing language laboratory classes to students have become mandatory in educational institutions. The States will establish state of the art, appropriate, cost effective and adequate ICT and other enabling infrastructure in all secondary schools. Based on the size of the school, needs of the ICT programme and time-sharing possibilities, States will define an optimum ICT infrastructure in each school. Not more than two students will work at a computer access point at a given time. At least one printer, scanner, projector, digital camera, audio recorders and such other devices will be part of the infrastructure. (National Policy on ICT in School Education, 2012)

Methods of teaching English has been growing leaps and bounds, consequently many educational institutions have been equipped with well configured laptops and computers. The demise of the traditional methods came in the twenty first century, with the falling out of the audio-visual methods. It is noticed that many colleges have been using YouTube as a major course book to teach English language. However, the advent of affordable multimedia and computers have been bringing noticeable transformation among the students in bettering their spoken skills. Hard drives of the hybrid personal computers, digital laptops have been filled with world of English in which students enjoy the language learning. The saved content has been supplementing in bettering their language skills over and above the debates that have been downloaded from various channels have a lot impact on their minds. In contrast, the language laboratory is not giving satisfactory outcomes in confidence-building for interviews and competitive examinations which are very essential aspects in getting success in this competitive world. It is not an exaggeration in saying that there is no laboratory that has been teaching students to experience the questions of competitive examinations. Various examinations are being conducted by public service commissions at state and central level. More than ninety percent of the students do not have a little idea about the areas of English language that are being tested in the examinations of various public services. Students have been running after the coaching centres as they need to master English grammar that is being asked in the competitive examinations. Generally, present competitive examinations cannot include much of the spoken English in public service examinations, but most of the pre-installed

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soft wares are based on only spoken English. It is not harmful to concentrate on only spoken English, but useful grammatical aspects that are being asked in the competitive world need to be included in the programmes. Obviously, it is too difficult to add updated questions and their patterns in the language laboratories, but teachers need to take some strain in collecting the questions and getting it typed. The language laboratory sessions have been taking kinds of quizzes, extemporization of speaking, debates, skits etc., but the objective of the competitive examinations has been missing in curriculum of the language lab.

Employability and English Grammar

Employability and English grammar knowledge are interrelated. The better the skills that an individual has in English grammar, the easier their scope of employability is. Generally, the employment retention and career enhancement are the next challenges that the current generation has been suffering from. The activities like the group discussions, debates, extemporization and presentations can boost the skills of the employability. Most of these activities have been missing out in an academic calendar due to insufficient time that has been allotted to English language teaching. These activities play a vital role in strengthening personalities of the students who tend to fluctuate due to immaturity. Young students need to be created many circumstances in which they themselves train their characters by taking various roles.

AICTE Norms for a Language Laboratory

The Language Laboratory is used for language tutorials. These are attended by students who voluntarily opt for Remedial English classes. Lessons and exercises are recorded on a weekly basis so that the students are exposed to a variety of listening and speaking drills. This especially benefits students who are deficient in English and also aims at confidence-building for interviews and competitive examinations. The Language Laboratory sessions also include word games, quizzes, extemporization of speaking, debates, skits etc. These Lab sessions are complemented by online learning sessions which take place in the Multi-Purpose Computer Lab. This Lab shall have 25 Computers for every 1000 students.

Hypothesis

The role of a language laboratory has become very passive. It needs to be utilised properly as lakhs rupees of the investment is being spent by all educational institutions in both Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.

1. To explore the current function and grammar components of the language laboratory?
2. To know the running soft wares of Walden Info-Tech, Young India and Glabarena
3. To investigate the barriers in bringing the awareness of the competitive examinations through language laboratory?
4. What are the possible ways to make more efficient the usage of the language laboratory?

English Language Laboratory

The language laboratory is an audio or audio-visual installation used as an aid in modern language teaching. They can be found, amongst other places, in schools, universities, and academies. Perhaps the first lab was at the University of Grenoble in 1908. In the 1950s up until the 1990s, they were tape-based systems using reel to reel or (latterly) cassette. Current installations are generally multimedia PCs. The original language labs are now very outdated. They allowed a teacher to listen to and manage student audio via a hard-wired analogue tape- deck-based systems with 'sound booths' in fixed locations.

ICT has been trying to assist the teachers across the world to bring the learner autonomy in a language learning (Educause 2017).

Language laboratories are study rooms equipped with electronic sound-reproduction devices, enabling students to hear model pronunciations of foreign languages and to record and hear their own voices as they engage in pattern drills. Such laboratories are effective modes of operant learning, and, after a minimum vocabulary and syntax have been established, the learning can be converted into a stimulating form of problem solving.

Structure of the English Language Laboratory

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All colleges have not been using the same kind of computers and soft wares for english laboratories. They have been using the lab according their need and feasibility of the price to buy the software. As a part this study, I visited a few colleges in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh and studied the various running soft wares that have been in use.

Laboratory for Engineering First Year Students

Basic grammar topics like article, adjectives, comparisons and phonetics are being used for explanation and practice.

Laboratory for Engineering Second Year Students

Tense buster, Business writing and letter writing are being used for explanation and practice.

Independent Learning Through the Language Laboratory:

English language laboratory can make students to be independent learners since most of the youngsters can be in a position to learn something on their own. Independent learning refers to a mode of language learning in which learners work without direct teacher supervision, at their own pace, and often at times of their own choosing.

According to a 2016 report by job skills credentialing company Aspire Minds, nearly 80 per cent of engineering graduates in India are not employable. Most of them are forced to take up jobs in non-engineering fields or remain unemployed, (The Hindu 2017).

Independent learning may be undertaken to supplement a teacher-led course, or it may constitute a programme of learning in its own right. The world of competitive examinations have been moving with an unprecedented competition due to ever growing high literacy rate in the modern society. People need not to refer only books to crack the examinations, they can take the assistance of the internet and gadgets to simplify their strain. It usually takes place in a self-access centre, which provides learners with a library of language learning resources in various media and a range of technical facilities. Attempts to implement this mode of learning have been particularly

widespread in higher and adult education, where independent learning has frequently been discussed in conjunction with autonomy and learning styles.

Aim of the Competitive Examinations Is Being Neglected

Most of the graduates find that English is an Achilles heel to get success in the competitive examinations. Academic perfection is quite different from securing top ranks in the competitive examinations. Some students have a privilege that came from English medium schools in answering the questions of the English language part. Usually, students who came from Telugu medium lags behind their privileged counterparts though they are doing extraordinary in other sections. Most of the teachers have got enough workload of teaching English and they feel that it is not needed to teach anything in the laboratory.

Reforms in the field of education have been warranted on a continual basis as the changing needs of the nation states and its population required new avenues of thinking and increasing access of the population to the means of education. This can only be done through reforms in educational policy that can address the educational needs of the larger population. It is also important to increase the skill bases of the population in order to make them eligible for not only employability but even to start their own ventures. (Dr. J. Prabhakar Rao).

All engineering students do not concentrate much on competitive examinations as they have been dreaming about the research or higher education. Neither the students nor the teachers cannot think about the grammatical elements of English for competitive examinations. As a result, the aim and objective of English for competitive examinations have been missing from the academic calendar. Teachers aware that English has become crucial in an individual's academic and professional career but updating previous question papers along with necessary modules is a Herculean task without a data entry operator in the lab. Each laboratory needs to have a postgraduate laboratory assistant who generally maintain the register and details of the students. He doesn't have any chance to look into the modules that have been given in a software. It is known fact that learning grammar rules do not help the students to score well in the examinations, but basics are needed to have command over the examination paper.

Internet Facility Can Bring Some Awareness on the Competitive Examinations

The competitive examinations need a lot of practice since they are always stressful for students. The prominence of online method of practice has been on the rise because quick response of testing and track of the progress. Most of the students believe that the online examinations train the minds of the students to get a quick and definite answers. Having observed all opinions, it is very essential to use Digital Language Laboratory as a place of testing. Digital Language Laboratory has full pledged internet connection with individual storage drive to save the progress of the students. Students can improve their ability of grammar and comprehension for competitive examinations by the assistance of the digital language laboratory. Students prefer online examination because flexibility of practising the mock tests regularly as a part of preparation for the examinations. The advantage of language laboratory is the time management that enable students to save the time by taking online examinations. Time management is the basic necessity for every aspirant of the competitive examinations and the online approach would cultivate the quick response in students.

English Language Laboratory Must Be Linked with Competitive Examinations Cell

All universities have been running the competitive examination cell of late. The main objective of the cell is to create awareness among the students regarding the various competitive examination scheduled by the various public service commissions. Generally, the cell conducts coaching classes and prepares the mock tests to all the students. One of the objectives of English language laboratory is to bring some awareness on English grammar in the various examinations. When these two departments work together it will be more beneficiary to the students in terms of question paper setting and giving the results. It is not bringing a coaching centre to the educational English language laboratory but making it reachable to all the students. There will be special classes for spoken English on the other hand they have to be trained for competitive examinations also. Various online lectures can be provided through digital English laboratory so that teachers can lessen their burden of extra classes. However, scheduled classes are not enough to complete the planned syllabus on the university campuses.

The Importance of Teacher-Made Tests

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Teachers need to be given some free time to prepare the questions on the grammatical topics that have been asked in the ongoing examinations. Having taken enough workload of regular teaching, it is not fair enough to burden them to gather the ongoing papers of the examinations. It is a known fact the best practices of teaching can be brought out by a good action research. Teachers need be involved in an action research to bring out satisfactory results in utilizing the language laboratory. Private coaching centres are mushrooming everywhere in India to supplement the life skills for the students. Parents and students are paying ransom amount of money for those lectures that make students to achieve employability. The prime objective of education is to make students to get the employment, but the students are in a need for the coaching centres. This is a high time to concentrate on redesigning of the syllabus of English language laboratory. It is not needed to buy video modules by spending a lot of amount of money as most of the online hubs have been offering video lectures for free accessibility for instance TSAT (Telangana Skills, Academic and Training). Teacher friendly soft wares need to be made to make teacher can prepare their own question and answers so that students to practise various kinds to exercises along with present competitive examinations.

Conclusion

It is found that much research has not been taken place on strengthening the English language laboratory and syllabus. Thus, a good research may bring some change in utilising the time that has been given in an academic calendar. The existed programmes have been benefiting the students in bettering their communication skills, but a little more research and restructuring the programmes is mandatory. The language laboratory need to become a helpful aid for practising the assessing the grammatical knowledge of the students. The language laboratory is not only used for listening to a model pronunciation, repeat and record the same but also practising various grammar games, quizzes and practising the previous question papers to grade themselves where they are. The presence of teacher is not necessary all the time in a language laboratory; students need to be given enough video and quizzes to get familiarized with all kinds of grammatical patterns that are being used in competitive examinations in India.

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