

Learning English As a Second Language & Role of Digital Language Lab



English

KEYWORDS : ELT, DIGITAL AND COMPUTERIZED, TERMINOLOGY, LANGUAGE LAB, GLOBAL LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

Today's world considers English as a global language because there has never been a language so widely spread or spoken by so many people as English. The purpose to write this paper is to provide an overview of technology-related changes that are taking place in the engineering institutes of India in learning and teaching English language and to examine how far these changes are actually able to make a difference at the ground level. The advancements in Science and Technology and their use of new terminology have been showing an immediate impact on the language, adding tens of thousands of words to the English dictionary. As these innovations come down from the English-speaking countries, those who wish to update their knowledge and learn about new inventions need to learn English well. In India, English language teaching mainly depends upon the chalk and talk method of teaching. But in recent times the major institutes have begun to realize that language learning should take place in a realistic and practical manner only to achieve language proficiency and fluency. The importance of the English language in educational field is clear from the fact that many countries have made English as an official language. Consequently, the English language teaching (ELT) has become one of the major growth industries around the world in the recent years. The objective of this paper is to present significance of Digital English Language lab in engineering and technology institutes in India. The quality of the language proficiency will enhance when students learn it from the multimedia, digital and computerized Language Lab.

Introduction:

Good communication skill grooms the personality of a person. In India good communication skill in English language is required to judge the whole personality of a person. Due to the impact and influence of information technology on society and education, computer-assisted language learning is becoming the trend in foreign language teaching. Interactive computer network allows students to test the result of learning without the risk of being punished for any mistake. Learning does not have to be a pressure. Computer-assisted language learning can reduce the anxiety of students and turns out to be a positive side of learning. Instead of being the main tool outside of the formal classroom, it is only one of many tools, all of which can be used to enhance the education of students. Thus, all institutes of higher learning in India have English as one of their core subjects. And due to rapid advancements in technology in the world today, there is now a demand in most of these institutes to adapt technology based learning methods for English language teaching (ELT).

Different methods of ELT and role of Digital English Language lab:



The demand for English has been far-reaching almost all the fields of national life like politics, international relations, and media, Communication, travel and education. Most of the earlier scientific innovations were made in Britain and are now continued in America. The advancements in Science and Technology

and their use of new terminology have been showing an immediate impact on the language, adding tens of thousands of words to the English lexicon. So teaching English through grammar translation method may lead to understand written language but speaking and listening is totally ignored in this language. Memorizing the grammar rules often does not help students to use the language. It also becomes a tedious experience. Speech is neglected and the advanced skills of reading and writing are stressed in this method. It fails to create a direct bond between thought and expression and hinders the development of fluency in speech and writing. As the method advocates the use of the mother tongue, it is unsuitable for a class with different language backgrounds.

Teaching English through Direct Method is also not completely effective. This method believes that language is primarily speech and therefore the oral communication skills are built up in a carefully graded progression around the question-and-answer exchanges. Classroom instruction is conducted exclusively in the target language and pictures are used to make the meanings clear. New teaching points are introduced orally through objects, demonstrations and pictures. But there are some limitations of this method i.e. it becomes very difficult to associate the expressions directly in the target language especially teaching abstract ideas. It gives excessive stress on the spoken form and neglected reading and writing to a substantial degree. It lays great stress in the teacher and increases her stress in as much as they have to supply the students with the language exercises on par with the native speakers of the language. Sometimes it ignores the explicit teaching of grammar. It fails to strengthen the language habits of the students. In a country like India it became very difficult to find competent teachers.

Teaching English through Direct Method is also not very effective as it only focuses on reading not on writing, speaking and listening. The Bilingual Method incorporates different aspects of the Direct Method and the Grammar-Translation Method. The use of mother tongue is allowed but strictly controlled and limited to the teacher. The student uses the mother tongue only if he is expected to be an interpreter or a translator. The syllabus is built around situations and all language skills are considered equally important. It involves imitation and interpretation of basic sentences of foreign language. This method is effective as it has freed the teachers from a feeling of guilt for using mother tongue, occasionally in the classroom.

If in India grooming personality is equal to good communication skill in English Language so to include all the aspects i.e. Speaking, Writing, listening and Reading 'Computer-assisted language learning' is required which is only possible through

Digital language Lab. A digital language lab should serve as an additional tool to all the above methods. A Language Lab should serve as an important point for the entire Language Department and endeavor to maintain a pleasant environment contributing to the study of languages utilizing present technology. With a minimum of effort, and even a minimum of space, a facility can be set up to enhance the language program already in place. In lab randomly assigned activities and groups also lead to many helpful discussions and debates among the members. Gradually, the students become comfortable with teamwork such that it now hardly matters to them who they are working with.

It is also noted that multimedia software and production tools provide students with a richer linguistic environment that accommodate their needs both through animations, videos and graphics to demonstrate difficult concepts, as well as through clear audio to model correct pronunciation and to repeat sounds and words. She notes that integrating technology into language teaching also helps students feel comfortable with and enjoy using 21st century technology.

Some key features of a Language lab are:

- Learners get aware with the advance technology in teaching learning process.
- Learners have opportunities to interact with each other and negotiate meaning.
- Learners interact in the target language with an authentic audience.
- Learners are involved in authentic tasks.

- Learners are open to the elements and encouraged to produce varied and creative language.
- Learners have enough time and feedback.
- Learners are guided to attend mindfully to the learning process.
- Learners work in an atmosphere with an ideal stress/concern level.
- Learner independency is supported.

Some Language lab software currently available in India:

- Digital Language Lab (DLL)
- Globerena English Lab
- Clarity Language Learning Software Courses
- Dyned English Courses
- Tense Buster
- Sky Pronunciation
- Vocaboly (To improve vocabulary)

Conclusion:

As the importance of the English language in educational field is clear from the fact that many countries have made English as an official language. It is not meant that Digital language Lab should be the only tool to be used in the teaching learning process, but rather as a tool. With care, planning, and flexibility, it can only serve to improve the program already in existence. The quality of the language proficiency will be ornamental and improved when students learn it from the multimedia, digital and computerized Language Lab.

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