A Study of the Direct Relation between English Language and Professional Success in India with Special Reference to the Role of Language Lab in the Teaching of English

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Abstract:

Expertise in English Language is a major concern in the global market. Everyone aspires to be proficient in English language as survival in the modern world is next to impossible without having appropriate knowledge of English. Right from the beginning of one's education, one gets constantly dominated by the alluring beauty of English as it remains to be an invincible tool of elite class. Thus it becomes extremely important to focus on an unavoidable factor that plays a vital role in the entire process of education, recruitment and professional success. Considering the relevance of English language, it is being introduced in almost all the professional courses in one way or the other. But the question that perplexes us for the most time is 'how to train students to become an effective communicator in English language?' The problem becomes more complicated in India as it happens to be a multilingual country. Thus the present paper focuses on the role of language laboratories in teaching English to Indian students along with an exploration of different issues relating to the problem. Here an attempt is also being made to find out the concrete solutions to the problems relating to the teaching of English in India and its effective implementation with special reference to the technical institutes of Uttar Pradesh.

Key words: English, ESP, Placement, Success, Specialization.

The higher education landscape is undergoing significant changes as a result of technological innovations. There have been significant changes in the way of teaching as well as learning. These new technologies and pedagogies are having a clear and positive impact on education making teaching and learning hassle free for both the teachers and learners. Now a day what we need most for our professional success is a fair amount of knowledge and an ability to speak well to keep pace with the modern trends. Furthermore what remains unavoidable is the proficiency in English language as the survival in the global mart mostly depends upon it. As we all know that very few are blessed with the gift of the gab but majority need to hone this skill to be an effective communicator. Now what we need to remember is that knowing English language is entirely different from communicating well in English. Since I hail from the same field I came across many people who were too knowledgeable in terms of knowing English language but they entirely failed when it came to communicate in English. Their accent, fluency, tone, facial expressions and body language turned out to be hilarious. Thus my bitter experience in this field forced me to attempt this paper as I found it to be the need of time to make people understand the difference between communication and effective communication.

Communication might refer to the sharing of ideas and information but effective communication refers to sharing of ideas that leave a mark upon the listener leaving him spell bound where one wants to 'listen' you rather 'hear' you. There is a difference between listening and hearing. Where hearing refers to a passive exercise, listening refers to an active exercise where the listener listens actively and also gives the feedback making the communication process complete. Now the question

comes how can you make your audience listen to you? It's an important question where the secret of effective communication remains hidden. To explore the hidden secret we must know the technological aid that can help to be an effective communicator.

Teaching is a universal phenomenon where a teacher tries to deliver his best. Burton defines Teaching as, 'the stimulation, guidance, direction and encouragement of learning.' So the teachers plan, organise and execute to get maximum output but unfortunately the result varies from person to person. In one class students actively participate and try to give their best but in another class the result turns out to be dissatisfactory as half of the class even fail to grasp the basic things. So what is the difference between two lectures? Why the learners entirely fail to comprehend? It's a major issue because unless teachers themselves comprehend the things successfully nothing substantial can be delivered. In the words of Morrison, 'comprehension means mastery of the subject matter. It is reached when thorough understanding of the subject matter is done through planned learning. An understanding means seeing relationship and reaching certain generalisations and their uses in life situations.' So if we understand the difference we get the key to success.

Now days there are many other devises that make teaching easy and effective. Digital technology is an ally to higher education making it too convenient for teachers and learners both but again the same problem crops up that how many can actually use technology to get the best results? As per my perspective the satisfactory answer to this question can't be given as very few actually use this aid in an appropriate manner. Talking about the technical institutes of Uttar Pradesh the situation becomes worst as often the teachers entirely fail to utilise the technology for students' benefit. Even the concept of Language Lab turns out to be a nightmare for many due to one or the other reason. Now here it becomes

essential to understand the term, Language Lab. According to Wikipedia:

"The **language laboratory** is an audio or audio-visual installation used as an aid in modern language teaching….The 'traditional' system generally comprises a master console (teacher position) which is electrically connected to a number of rows of student booths, typically containing a student tape recorder and headset with a boom arm microphone…The teacher console is usually fitted with master playback source equipment (tape recorder), some means of monitoring of each booth in the class via the teacher headset and an intercom facility offering 2-way communication between teacher and student." Thus on the basis of aforesaid definition 'Language Lab' refers to an audio visual aid that is used within a specific surrounding to assist in language teaching.

Talking about the advantages of lab it is like a boon to second language learners as they get an opportunity to learn a foreign language easily and correctly. As in a lab setting they not only learn the language but also the correct pronunciation and accent making it easy for them to interact with a native speaker. They are given tips on language usage, vocabulary, basic grammatical pattern, formation of sentences, speech mechanism and standard pronunciation i.e. RP. They also get a chance to learn through practice sessions where they repeat, record and rectify the new words and sentences and learn the correct pronunciation. The students also get a platform to speak without hesitation through short sessions of public/official speaking, role play presentation etc. Thus language lab assists the learners and the trainers to make learning-teaching easy and effective. Often various practicals are taken up in a language lab to make the learners learn a language systematically. The syllabus that is being provided by Dr. A.P. J.AKTU for the Language Lab is as follows:

"Interactive and Communicative Practical with emphasis on Oral Presentation / Spoken Communication based on International Phonetic Alphabets (I.P.A.)

LIST OF PRACTICALS

1. Group Discussion: Practical based on Accurate and Current Grammatical Patterns.
2. Conversational Skills for Interviews under suitable Professional Communication Lab conditions with emphasis on Kinesics.
3. Communication Skills for Seminars / Conferences / Workshops with emphasis on Paralinguistics / Kinesics.
4. Presentation Skills for Technical Paper / Project Reports / Professional Reports based on proper Stress and Intonation Mechanics.
5. Official / Public Speaking based on suitable Rhythmic Patterns.
6. Theme- Presentation / Key-Note Presentation based on correct argumentation methodologies.
7. Individual Speech Delivery / Conferences with skills to defend Interjections / Quizzes.
8. Argumentative Skills / Role Play Presentation with Stress and Intonation.
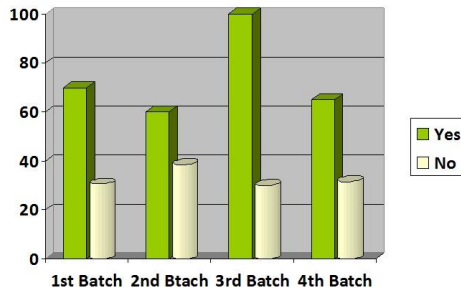9. Comprehension Skills based on Reading and Listening Practicals on a model Audio-Visual Usage."

Thus if we analyze the above mentioned syllabus we see that it is beautifully designed to accommodates the needs of Second Language Learners but still there remain some lacunas e.g it does not provide a uniform Software to be used by all. Furthermore it does not give any guidelines concerning the usage of lab leaving it in the hands of untrained professionals who themselves lack an ability to handle such labs. Not only

this but it also fails to understand the need of multilingual students who learn each and every thing in connection with their mother tongue. Such students entirely fail to grasp the overall concept of Language Lab thus resulting in a complete fiasco.

To understand the various reasons behind this failure of communication lab, a survey was conducted where hundred students of Dr. A.P.J. AKTU were given a set of questions to reply in YES or NO. The Questions that were given to the students were as follows:

1. Do you consider the Language Lab to be a powerful tool to learn English Language?
2. Do you consider the lack of proficient trainers to be a major reason behind the failure of Language Lab?
3. Do the trainers fail to motivate the students to perform efficiently?
4. Do you feel hesitant to speak in the Language Lab?
5. Do you find the atmosphere of the lab to be monotonous?
6. Do you feel that the software that is used in the lab is obsolete?
7. Do you feel that the syllabus of the lab needs some moderate changes?
8. Do you want Language Lab to be continued in the syllabus?
9. Do you feel it can really be helpful if used properly?
10. Do you hold regional language to be responsible for poor accent of students?

The outcome of the above mentioned questions turned out to be really surprising:

Thus the following factors can be stated to be the major reasons for the utter failure of Language Lab in the technical Institutes of Uttar Pradesh:

1. Lack of Infrastructure: This plays a major role in the failure of Language Lab as most of the institutes in UP do not have even proper infrastructure to accommodate the need of Second Language Learners.

2. Untrained Faculty: This is one of the most important factor that contributes to the failure of Language Lab as the faculty remains to be untrained thus failing to utilise the lab for the benefit of students. Many times even they fail to use the software efficiently thus resulting in sheer wastage of time.

3. Lack of motivation: Lack of knowledge to use the system properly demotivates the trainers as well as the learners. Poor accent and improper English add fuel to the fire thus resulting in lack of enthusiasm.

4. Hesitation: So many times the students hesitate to speak even few lines that spoil the atmosphere of the lab as the repetition of the same results in sheer wastage of time for others.

5. Adverse influence of regional language: This acts as a barrier to learn English Language as Second Language Learners always learns a foreign language in the background of one's mother tongue. Regional Language adversely affects the accent learning.

6. Monotonous lectures: Sometimes it is noted that the faculty end up giving lectures in the lab in absence of some substantial activities. That clearly results in monotonous schedules thus de motivating the learners to attend the labs.

7. Obsolete software: In many institutes obsolete software is used that again adversely affects the learners resulting in the failure of Language labs.

8. Poor Syllabus: Today the need of moderate changes in syllabus is felt everywhere as it will certainly help the learners to participate enthusiastically.

CONCLUSION:

On the basis of abovementioned we see that there are various factors that are responsible for the failure of Language Lab else it is a powerful tool to teach English to Second Language Learners. If we try to overcome the specific issues, we can get the maximum output e.g. trained professionals are the utmost requirement of the time. For that we can hire trained professionals or we can train language teachers so that they succeed in using the software effectively as half of the time they don't comprehend the various functions provided by the Software companies resulting in an ineffective usage of the software. Thus rigorous training of teachers can solve this issue. Even the software should also be updated to keep pace with the modern trend. Besides proper infrastructure should also be provided by the college administration as too many students can't be handled at a time in a language lab. If we confine it to 15:1 ratio, the chances of improvement will increase. Spacious rooms with proper seating arrangements should be provided for better results. Even the administration should keep a check on the training programs so that the students don't miss the labs due to any reasons. Simultaneously

Teachers should try to make the atmosphere conducive where all should be encouraged to participate actively. Focus should be given to make the lab schedules lively and interactive. The lab should be used as a platform to let the students come up with their innermost thoughts without hesitation. Unless they feel free to communicate they won't be able to come out of their confinements. Even the university syllabus should also be changed to accommodate the need of students' .e.g. few activity based practicals can be added where students learn through fun activities. Thus if we use the communication lab prudently it can actually be a great support to make the learning a fun process where the learners will no longer be scared to share and to specialize thus carving a niche in the professional world.

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