

## **Role of English Language Lab Trainer as a Troubleshooter**

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### **Abstract**

*English language lab is a young kid of ICT in India. After the development of ICT English language laboratory plays an important role in teaching English. As it is a technological aid for learning, it has a number of advanced facilities that can help teachers and learners in the teaching learning process. In India language laboratory is a developing concept. For many developing colleges, how to use language lab is a problem. Those who are using it require guidance to use it effectively. In all these circumstances a lab trainer has to play a versatile role. He has to tackle technical as well as teaching method related problems. For effective use of language, a lab trainer has to take up the responsibility. Main problems to address are electronic literacy, using courseware with overseas content, managing heterogeneous groups, technical problems, exercises making. Lab trainer will play the role of a troubleshooter.*

**Key Words:** *Language Lab, Electronic literacy, Quick learner, Slow learner, Placement test*

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

In present scenario of this world a common language for communication is a must. English is the Lingua Franca of the globe. In learning English language laboratory plays an important role. As it is a technological aid for learning, it has a number of advanced facilities that can help teachers and students in teaching learning process. The curriculum of the present educational system in India does not have a laboratory session for arts subjects. It is a common belief that only those who study science subjects have to perform practical work, which is undertaken in a laboratory. Hence, a laboratory for language learning is something new to Indian students. Nowadays central as well as state governments have started taking initiative for it by providing language lab facility in college campus. Now the dilemma is that facility of language lab is there but how to use it is a problem. Those who are using it require guidance to use it effectively. In all these circumstances lab trainer has to perform a role of troubleshooter. Following are some major problems faced by most of language lab trainer.

1. Problem of electronic literacy ( for self and for students)
2. Using courseware with overseas content
3. Handling heterogeneous group
4. Dealing with Technical Problems
5. Making exercises

Above mentioned problems are discussed here in deep and probable solutions are also suggested. By solving these problems the noble task of teaching English as a foreign language can be achieved effortlessly. Teaching students how to use the language is considered to be at least as important as learning the language itself.

### **II. THE PROBLEM OF ELECTRONIC ILLITERACY**

The concept of Language Laboratory is developing in India. ICT is a more effective way of teaching a foreign language compared to using traditional methods. The condition is such that many trainers are not technically trained to deal with ICT. During their time such facility was not available. Even in their professional teachers training courses like B.Ed. they don't have such training. It has been observed that most developed nations work comfortably with new technologies. Whereas developing nations are often overwhelmed with problems of using ICT. They face problems in understanding work of hardware and software which have been use in language lab. Trainer has to learn the basic operation of computer and have to acquire command over it. So being familiarize with computer and software becomes primary concern and teaching language becomes secondary for trainer. Due to these reason institution has to hire people who are not English teachers but are good at computer.

Students coming from rural or nontechnical back ground have no experience of dealing independently with computer or software. Sometimes they create problems for trainers. As a finding of research Szendeffy

(2005) points out that students are slow to change gears when they're at the wheel (that is, the mouse), so segue from one activity to another without abruptly interrupting their momentum. The time allotted to teach language goes away in teaching computer and software. Number of students who find computer difficult to deal with, they also find learning English a complicated task. The condition is that they learn two things parallel in a class English and Computer. So here technology becomes a barrier instead of being a helping hand. At the end of the whole training students have to give their online exam. Teacher has to learn to set a paper online and then he has to conduct number of mock tests to make the students familiar with this format of exam. Actually it's a trial and error method for both teacher and students. It is too hard to acquire computer skill and English all together. This affects the exam even. Students feel fear of failure and there are chances of comparatively less result.

### **Resolution**

To solve above problem a trainer has to be thoughtful and come out of conventional English class. English language teacher is required to be flexible and quick learner. Training sessions for effective use of language laboratories in regular interval are a dire need of time. If expert lectures are being arranged for trainers it can be of great help. Teachers who are well verse with technology and ICT are really benefited. If a trainer acquires good command of computer one can easily train students.

For students, we can make them familiar with computer by arranging computer classes from their primary schoolings. For college students or other learners who are not good at computers one has to arrange special computer training sessions for one or two hours. The other way is to provide common instruction of lab on common an LCD screen for better understanding. The best way is to mix those students who knows computer with them who don't. In the beginning a trainer has to overlook their technical skills and see their subject knowledge. When they will be familiar with the technology they will start using it. It's a trainer's moral duty to encourage one's students for electronic literacy for their successful carrier.

### **III. DEALING WITH AN OVERSEAS TEACHING COURSEWARE**

In all the countries where the concept of lab is newly introduced dealing with an overseas content is one more challenge for a trainer. Many developing countries like India, software installed in language lab is of foreign countries or it is under a remarkable influence on native countries. It is really a herculean task to teach the content which is unknown to you. It takes time to understand concepts like seven course meal, some festivals like Halloween and different parties. Many new words create problems like the word 'kiosk' our students are familiar with the word 'stall' but not with that new word. If one doesn't have the idea of barbecue party how can he/she know about grilling? In the same manner overseas context and matter is hard to understand. It has been observed that students commit mistakes in pronouncing foreign names. To pronounce some first names like Bartholomew, Christopher and Fitzgerald and last names like McKenna, Beatty and Maugham are too complicated. Mostly many of them are difficult in deciding gender for Indian students also. Some city and place are hard to pronounce Like Czechoslovakia, Amsterdam and Sphinx.

Some of their activities and gestures are irrelevant for our society like going on date and kissing. In all above mentioned cases trainer has to give more time in understanding these things than preparing for lessons. And obviously it is natural that if it is hard for trainer, it will definitely be harder for students. The most important thing is that the trainer has to compromise with his teaching techniques and methodology as he or she is already given the material and exercises. Changing teaching technique can be difficult for a trainer. For example; when one wants to teach grammar with the use of blanks but the software offers MCQs. Here trainer has to change teaching technique accordingly.

### **Resolution**

This issue cannot be solved overnight. It may take time. For this one has to be technologically independent or choosy in selecting software. One can select software with Indian content and Indian accent at primary level. Authority has to select such a provider who updates the software regularly. It can be of great use. We can ask them to make few changes if we want. If the content is not Indian we can make similar exercises with Indian content for their practice. Some providers provide exercise maker with the software so that we can make our own exercises to apply our own technique.

### **IV. HANDLING HETEROGENEOUS GROUP**

Mix group of learner is quit a common problem. Heterogeneous group may vary place to place. Students can be different by age, by social status or by knowledge level. Dealing with verity of students is dependable on the experience and skill of a teacher. In initial stage students start learning the software with same speed or pace. But one of advantages of Language is that a learner can move at his or her own speed. This advantage becomes disadvantage for trainer. It is impossible for a trainer to teach the same content to all the students. In this regards views of Szendeffy (2005) are; your role in the use of a content program, such as a

grammar or pronunciation program, for example, is to diagnose individual student needs and *assign* the appropriate area to focus on for each. Quick learners go with tremendous speed and slow learner can go with their convenience. In heterogeneous group using target language for instruction is also a challenge.

Students with different technical background are also the part of heterogeneous group. When students are from technical background trainer has to take care that they don't go in the digressions like internet or games. If a student is good at English but not good at handling computer well, will feel disappointed and will lag behind. Students may also vary in their age group in some cases. These happen when students, servicemen or housewives are learning at a same class. Now their knowledge levels obviously will different as their age is different. Teaching technique also may be different in such cases. Different students learn English with different purposes. Like collegians learn for good marks, businessmen learn for promotion, many a youngsters learn it go aboard, children learn as a subject to pass, housewives learn English to teach their children where as some retired people learn English as a time pass. When students work independently it becomes difficult to monitor, guide and evaluate everyone at one time. When it is the time for any exercise in different age group sometimes elders feel shy in speaking in front of young children.

Among immigrant students, some ELLs have strong academic preparation. They are at or above equivalent grade levels in the school curricula and are literate in their native language. For the most part, these students need English language development so that as they become more proficient in English, they can transfer their educational knowledge to the courses they are taking. These ELLs have the greatest likelihood of having educational success, if they receive appropriate language and content instruction in their schools.

Other immigrant students arrive at U.S. schools with limited formal schooling—perhaps due to war or the isolated location of their home. They have significant gaps in their educational backgrounds, lack knowledge in specific subject areas, and often need additional time to become accustomed to school routines and expectations. These ELLs need literacy skills, English language development, and content area knowledge.

When native English-speaking children enroll, they have oral proficiency and a natural understanding of the grammatical system. Curricula and instruction builds from the expectation that students know some English when they start school. Language minority students rarely have that level of proficiency. Students with limited formal schooling and below grade-level literacy are most at risk for educational failure. While most ELLs show sufficient growth in acquiring social language skills (e.g., basic reading and conversational skills geared to many out-of-school and survival interactions) in a few years, they are less successful in acquiring the academic language needed for passing the high-stakes assessment.

## **Resolution**

A trainer has to deal with the heterogeneous group with his own way. If possible one can divide class in various groups according to their level. To check their understanding level one can take their placement test before starting. Allotting appropriate time can be the other option. Like, noon time is preferable for housewives and night time is convenient for most of working people. In schools where age and motive is not the problem scholar, average and weak students can be separated. For monitoring and evaluating problem facility like remote desktop can be used. As per the study of researchers Warschauer and Healey memorization is less important in this information-rich time than effective search strategies, and students need the ability to respond and adapt to changes rather than training in a single way to approach a task. (Warschauer and Healey 58)

## **V. DEALING WITH TECHNICAL PROBLEMS**

If we talk about Language Laboratory it is a place where learners are provided a computer and a headphone. Language software which has already been installed in a server is connected with several computer booths. Innovative products such as digital multimedia control, wireless headsets and microphones are provided to students for learning language. As it has a lot of technical gadgets and functions there are chances of technical failure. Majority of problems are uncertain and able to give you surprise. If we look at some major problems one of them is power failure. As it is uncertain one has to be ready with optional teaching material. Here the setup of the lab does not permit the trainer to work like traditional class. As the computers are LAN connected frequently complains of connection failure occurs. It is too difficult to handle these types of issues simultaneously while teaching. If students intentionally or accidentally do some damage to system teacher has to pay the penalty by alternate arrangement. Virus problem can be avoided by antivirus but it is to be updated regularly.

Headphones also keep a trainer busy with the problems like audio failure and recording problem. Less care and rough use by learner is mainly responsible for it. Each software has its own requirements for example some programs are java base or some audio file can be played in particular version. If all the requirements don't mat number of problems may spring up abruptly. Particularly it happens at the time of updating software. But for all above problems trainer has to take help of technical personnel. As they are busy in their work and they have to give priority to early complain again their availability is a question.

## Resolution

Technology has become an integral part of everyone's life. Using computer and internet can make teaching learning process faster. Expert of second language acquisition Carol Chapelle (2001) says As we enter the 21st century, everyday language through use is so tied to technology that learning language through technology has become a fact of life with important implication for all applied linguists, particularly for those concerned with facets of second language acquisition. When technical problems come, one has to take quick decision and try to solve it. Being mentally ready to tackle any problem is the 95% solution of the problem. Criticizing computers or facilities or blaming technical personnel, damages the program's image. Students can see trainer's annoyance with technology and may lose their faith in the trainer's technical competence. To prevent computer from any damage 'Deep Freeze' facility is very useful. It protects systems from any kind of programming crash. Some problems can be shorted out by just a restart. It is always preferable to have few spare headphones for replacement. For programming quarries we can concern the provider online. Nowadays almost all the trainers use internet. With the help of internet we can connect our server PC to the provider by remote desktop and the error can be solved in no time. It saves time as well as money.

## VI. V. EXERCISES MAKING AND EVALUATION

It is easy to prepare exercise in conventional classes that one can use black board or ask several questions. Trainer can immediately write some exercise from text book or from one's notes. But here one has to make computerize exercise and has to upload them in server. Now if learners are doing different part or sessions how can one assign two to three various exercises to each of them. Making new exercises are even time consuming for a new trainer. The biggest hurdle for evaluation is that in many of the software they provide the option of show answer so they see the answers directly and get good grades. These increase the chances of inaccuracy in evaluation. In case of power failure a candidate has to give the test again.

## Resolution

A trainer has to be a versatile personality. He has to focus on finding other way. If we consider the advice of Hariharan (2011), he says Teachers have to cope with the change in the perception of the learners and to take a close look at the new roles of teachers in the light of the enormous importance being given to soft skills. If we observe the benefits of language lab that we can use pictures and multimedia freely and make our exercise livelier. Advance work or work division can make this task light. We can download few exercise directly from internet. Numbers of online exercises are available one can download it and use them number of times. There is no need of manual checking. Probably this is one of the great reliefs for a teacher. And there is very less chance of variation. A creative teacher can design number of activity for students like role play, conversation, different types of competitions and celebrations.

## VII. CONCLUSION

Trainer's job is to work for designing solution. On the very moment we accept the role of a trainer our duty is to resolve problems. Resolve problems of students as well as problems of self. It is clearly seen that there are problems but there are solutions as well. As Language Laboratory is in its initial stage it may take time to solve problem. Keeping the bright future in mind we have to work out. By taking help of experts and trainer those who are working with it since last few years we can make our task easy. Computer is just a machine. Mankind has made computer, computer hasn't made mankind. So what a man can computer can't. It works on our command. One just has to learn those commands.

Today or tomorrow one has to make one's self familiar with technology. It is better to accept the positive change positively. Our superior authorities also know that language laboratories are a developing concept and hurdles may come. If we will bring problems to their notice with probable solutions they will also show their kind concern to it. Working in changing environment is challenging as well as exiting. This sense of newness will make our teaching experience enjoyable for sure.

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