

## Significance of Communication Labs in English Language Teaching

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**ABSTRACT:** *The modern competitive world expects communicative skills and high English language proficiency as an essential element in the skills required to be a qualified competitor professional. English language learning has therefore become a necessity for every Indian student today. Language learning is not the same as learning any other subject. Elitism in computer technology has made a necessary tool for learning and developing the skills of oral and written interactions, commonly referred to as Communication lab (Computer Assisted Language Learning). Many private and public universities and Other Technical University have made use of communication lab mandatory for students. Communication lab is an elevating tool in learning English language skills through technology in the present generation. The best part is that it is learner centric rather than teacher centric. This new way of language learning is fast gaining acceptance globally. It is a boon for non-native learners for whom English is a second language. And the results are quite encouraging.*

**Key words:** *Computer Assisted Language Learning, Communication lab, English language proficiency*

### Introduction:

***“Technology cannot be goal in itself. However, a holistic integration of technology in teaching is the need of the hour”*** - Mini Joseph

English language has become essential especially for young generation who aspire to advance their careers anywhere in the world. The modern competitive world expects communicative skills and high English language proficiency as a vital element in the skills required to be a qualified competitor professional. It is a fact that most students who do not find a placement after completion of their technical studies are very much dependent on their ability to express themselves and their knowledge efficiently. While highlighting the importance of employment-oriented education, a Vice-Chancellor of one famous University of India, explained that ***“Personality development and communication skills are equally important for students in finding respectable jobs in addition to their academic records”***.

**Discussion:**

English language learning has therefore become a necessity for every Indian student today. English Language learning is not the same as learning any other subject. It is not limited to writing an examination and getting a degree. All four abilities of listening, speaking, reading and writing have to be skilled. Being proficient in communication is the most important factor when seeking a placement in corporate world or in an administrative field. Communication includes one's ability to listen carefully so as to grasp the meaning and to respond in turn with apt words and clarity of pronunciation.

We live in a multilingual and multicultural world, which is being reduced in size to the size of a village by the advancement of science and technology. For many years, foreign language teachers have used computer to provide supplemental exercises. In recent years, advancements in computer technology have motivated software developers as well as teachers to reassess the use of computer and consider it as an essential part of daily foreign language learning. Innovative and interactive software programs, CD technology and intricate computer network are providing teachers with new methods of enriching vocabulary, grammar, interactive drills on real-life situations and writing into it. Simultaneously students become familiar with audio, visual and textual information about the culture and language of non-native and native speakers. Combining all these methods with the use of computer technology, communication lab has come into existence.

With the view of improving and extending lifelong language and making English language teaching more effective, communication lab has become a valuable and obviously challenging trend in the autonomy delegated to higher professional educational institutions. Elitism in computer technology has made it available as a necessary tool for learning and developing the skills of oral and written interactions, commonly referred to as Communication lab (Computer Assisted Language Learning). It also explores the challenges faced by English teachers incorporating Computer Assisted Language Learning approach in their teaching.

The goal of Communication lab is the same as that of foreign language teaching-learning process, which is to impart students the resources and experiences that will allow them to listen, speak, read and write in that target language they are learning. The integration of the computer into the foreign language classroom has been an important tool for the foreign language teacher and student and is one among many of the tools available for teaching and learning another language.

Many private and public universities such as *Teerthanker Mahaveer University*, Moradabad and Other Technical University have made use of communication lab mandatory for students. These labs have removed the limitation of time and space found in traditional language teaching.

Besides motivating the learners and raising their self-esteem and confidence, it can enhance their interaction, articulation and participation in mutual learning. Communication labs provide immediate feedback that facilitates learners' learning practice. The use of interactive activities through texts, images, audio and visual aids, recording etc. enhances learners' interests in language classes.

### **Objectives of communication lab:**

Communication lab may have the following objectives, purposes, functions to work upon.

- To maintain good linguistic proficiency- through accuracy in grammar, Pronunciation & Vocabulary.
- To develop practical competence, to understand the grammatical form & function & scale of formality.
- To enrich the communication competence, to prepare the learner to be able to produce contextualize written text and speech.
- To acquire strategic proficiency to use both spoken & written language to use in a wide range of communication strategies.
- To practice voice based activities through model imitation, voice recording, voice graph and variable speed playback to neutralize accent & acquire fluency.

### **Advantages of communication lab:**

Merits of communication lab are increasing its popularity day by day. Some of them are discussed below:

- Communication Lab gives freedom to students to learn at their own pace. Among the four inclusive skills of language learning, listening and reading skills are receptive whereas speaking and writing skills are productive. These skills can be effective, when the learner learns at his own velocity and improves with his own interest.
- Communication labs improve listening skills. The primary form of linguistic communication is speech and so listening is the most important receptive (and learning) skill for foreign language students. An aptitude to listen and construe various shades of meaning from what is heard is a fundamental communicative ability. Accurate perception of the sounds of the language is the first stage which leads to interpretation and comprehension. While listening to a foreign language, one needs to be familiar with the sounds, rhythms, tunes and stress patterns of that language. All the pronunciation work promotes the students' listening ability.
- Students are attentive in the lab than in the theory class.
- Communication Lab builds self confidence.

- Stress pattern, phonetics and grammar in learning process through Communication Lab are useful.
- Active participation in this lab results in effective spoken language.
- Communication lab cultivates the habit of reading passages from the computer monitor.
- Communication Lab helps the students to acquire comprehension skills after listening to a text.
- Communication Lab trains students to face interviews, group discussions and public speaking.
- The shy learners can get more benefits as they are monitored individually by the monitor.
- The communication laboratory is very useful for evaluating students' speech. It provides students with the practical tools to get the best samples of pronunciation of the language.
- The electronic devices used in the laboratory will stimulate the eyes and ears of the learner to acquire the language quickly and easily.
- The laboratory's collection is designed to assist learners in the acquisition and maintenance of aural comprehension, oral and written adeptness, and cultural awareness.
- To attain responsiveness for the sounds and rhythm of a language, one has to hear the best samples of a spoken language.

In short, a learner can get the experience of having interaction with native speakers through the laboratory. Hence, the communication lab has become the need of the hour in English language learning process for communication.

### **Barriers:**

Some barriers faced by the teachers and students in implementing the Communication lab effectively.

- Expensive
- Need of regular maintenance.
- Lack of trained instructors for students in communication lab.
- Lack of motivation due to lack of knowledge of software and its operation.
- Lack of good software according to the level of the students.

### **Suggestions:**

Mere existence of computers in the communication lab does not show the way to learning. The teachers must insist on guidance rather than learner-control.

- A learning environment is to be formed. Like any other tools / instruments, the communication lab becomes most useful in the hands of a craftsman who knows how to use it skillfully. For this purpose there must be trained instructor in communication lab so that he/she may motivate and guide the learner in right direction.
- Interesting and goal-oriented software (according to the mental level of the learners) should be installed into computers of communication lab.
- Communication lab should be updated and maintained time to time.
- After qualifying each learning path/ level in software, learners' acquired knowledge should be checked and encouraged.

### Conclusion:

Hence, it is high time that our traditional teaching methods underwent change. Unless the new technology is adopted in English language teaching, we cannot instill language skills in our learners at the rate of growing competition. Communication lab is an elevating tool in learning English language skills through technology in the present generation. The best part is that it is learner centric rather than teacher centric. This new way of language learning is fast gaining acceptance globally. It is a boon for non-native learners for whom English is a second language. And the results are quite encouraging.

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