
THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE LAB ACTIVITIES IN ENHANCING COMMUNICATION SKILLS AMONG THE STUDENTS OF TECHNOLOGY AND SCIENCE

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Abstract: The central idea of writing this chapter is to highlight the language activities in the communication skills labs among engineering students in terms of enhancing communication skills. Today's 21st century is renowned as the age of science and technology where science and technology achieved rapid strides, in every field almost including teaching English language with possible technology. English as a global language undoubtedly reach the status of official language of the world. Since the time of colonialism, English has been spreading across the world, till today it's being occupied official language status in terms of communication skills and soft skills. Nowadays, effective communication and soft skills are inevitable to attain not only the attention of the world but to gain targets as desired by the corporate. In these circumstances, it is mandatory for the upcoming professionals to enrich in essential English skills which are considered vital, inevitable in terms of job searching in the neck deep competition of the professional world. Engineering education predominantly occupies larger part of professional career in changing the world of science and technology.

An outcome of interacting and teaching English language and communication skills for engineering students for the past many years, some useful suggestions have been given to develop communication competence among the students with activity based teaching communication skills.

Keywords: English Language Labs, Activities, Functioning, Utilization, Barriers and Suggestions.

1.0 Introduction: The central idea of writing this chapter is to highlight the language activities in the communication skills labs among engineering students in terms of enhancing communication skills. Today's 21st century is renowned as the age of science and technology where science and technology achieved rapid strides, in every field almost including teaching English language with possible technology. English as a global language undoubtedly reach the status of official language of the world. Since the time of colonialism, English has been spreading across the world, till today it's being occupied official language status in terms of communication skills and soft skills. Nowadays, effective communication and soft skills are inevitable to attain not only the attention of the world but to gain targets as desired by the corporate. In these circumstances, it is mandatory for the upcoming professionals to enrich in essential English skills which are considered vital, inevitable in terms of job searching in the neck deep competition of the professional world. Engineering education predominantly occupies larger part of professional career in changing the world of science and technology. An outcome of interacting and teaching English language and communication skills for engineering students for the past many years, some useful suggestions have been given to develop communication competence among the students with activity based teaching communication skills.

1.1 Role and significance of English Language Skills: English language labs play a crucial role in enhancing communication skills among the students studying engineering and technology courses. Successful communication skills enable students to attain considerable goals and targets not only in Alma mater but also to meet the requirements of everyday corporate life. The prime aim of the lab is to focus on developing students in the LSRW skills. The activities performed during lab sessions are to invoke latent abilities among the students as many of them hail from rural areas and for many whose background medium of instruction is largely L1. The strategy of the lab activities is to provide wide

range of learning opportunities by creating an adaptable ambience for the students besides instilling confidence and enthusiasm.

First of all the students need to be brushed up with constant motivation and to be explained clearly about the importance of thinking logically and how critical thinking will solve the problems in everyday life. For them it's basic need to find appropriate solutions to the problems by communicate clearly. They must be in need to be creative and work in a team in collaborative environment. At this point, it's significant that the students of engineering need to be trained in a multitude of transferable skills and they are required special attention for on personality development mentorship as this will surely help them to train up by their expertise faculty in their respective institutions where student centered instruction will be prioritized in teaching communication and soft skills in order to prepare them for on and off campus placements. In many engineering colleges, English language faculty members are actively involved in placement training and they are expected to play significant role in shifting communication skills to multi-skills in an integrated manner.

1.2 Description of Language Lab: English language labs have different names such as language labs or activity labs or communication skills labs etc. These labs play significant role in imparting English language skills among the students of engineering. The idea was innovative as to implement effective communication skills enable students to obtain considerable aptitude in everyday use of English language successfully. In general English language lab has a unique structural set-up. The state of the art lab consists of two fold way of lab structure. 1. Multimedia lab structure 2. Interactive lab structure.

As far as physical requirements of this structure is concerned the **Multimedia lab** which is also called as the computer aided language lab may have 60 systems or 120 as required in number and with a master console. In addition to this, LAN facility and English language software for self-study by learners is also an essential component.

Another segment of **Communication skills lab** requires cozy rounded revolving chairs and effective audio-visual setup with a digital stereo-AV system, P.A. system, a T.V., and camcorder etc. The communication skills Lab which is also known as CALL Lab (Computer Assisted Language Learning Lab) consists of adequate number of computers with the useful software modules and equipped with head phones and all systems are connected to teacher console well furnished. As far as Physical components of the interactive lab is concerned all are essential nt because larger scope is provided here to involve in teaching and participating in affinities related to physical components such as caller phone, mike, life size mirror, voice recorder etc.

1.3. The use and Function of Language Activity Labs: As day to day increasing demand of the growing importance for the effective communication skills and soft skills, English language is truly regarded as a tool for global communication and the consequent emphasis on training students to acquire language abilities. The activities practiced by the students will help them to grow in all round development of the learners even mould them psychologically stronger to face any conflict situation. And also these will encourage them to grow linguistically with strong background of communication competence. The primary aim is to keep the attention on the students who join engineering first year are just new comes from twelfth background or 10+2 (Intermediate level) as many of them are from L1 medium background.

Primarily, the language lab activities focus on the skills of LSRW skills viz. Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. And for the teachers, should prefer to allocate more time for STT (Student Talk Time) rather TTT (Teacher Talk Time). The students are encouraged to get involved in all these basic language or communication skills. Secondly, the language lab focuses on the production of sounds of language and familiarizes the students with the use of English in every day situation and contexts.

Learning Objectives:The learners' objectives have been designed according to the need of learning effective communication skills and soft skills and applying them in the right situation.

- To provide learners useful, practical and self-instructional activities to get trained in learner-friendly environment.
- To encourage students to cultivate the habit of reading articles, essays from the dailies and magazines etc.
- To motivate learners to defeat Anglo phobia and frigidity of learning and speaking English.
- To enable them to equip better pronunciation through stress, word accent, intonation and rhythm.
- To familiarize them with eloquence and fluency.
- To train them to use language effectively to face interviews, group discussions, public speaking.
- To initiate them to greater use of the writing activities such as resume' preparation, report writing, format-making etc.
- To train them in collaborative and group learning activities.

Effective communication skills can be learned and practiced through the language labs. Language lab enables the learners to acquire admirable ambience to learn and to master skills in learner friendly environment to get motivated constantly with higher competitive spirit. The basic purpose of communication is to share information as the process of issuing information, receiving information, interpreting information and respond to commands.

1.4. Major Topics for Language Activities: In general the syllabus prescribed for the text is authentic and approved; the language activities performed in the labs are the choice of the teacher and the students. The topics can be designed and demonstrated spontaneously according to the need and level of the learners.

In general the following topics are prioritized in the language labs. Many activities are being framed on the topics as such:

LSRW (Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing)

Basics to the Phonetics (Introduction to the sounds of English vowels, diphthongs and consonants)

- Word stress and intonation
- Know Your Everyday English
- Dialogues/Role play
- Spontaneity in Speaking/ Oral presentations (prepared and extempore)
- One Minute Talk (JAM)
- Oral and Written Description on objects/situations/people
- Directions/Suggestions/Advice
- Debates and Group Discussions
- Tele Calling Skills/Conference Skills
- Video Conferencing
- Speaking for Specific/ Scientific Purpose
- Speaking for Entertainment

1.5 Utilization of Language Labs: English labs are made compulsory for engineering students in many universities. In recent times the role of English labs has become very important in integrating the skills of students (with soft skills or life skills) with a lot of language practice through activity based learning.

- To consider multimedia lab, it is largely based on “learning by doing method” facilitated with self-learning materials. The learners are immensely benefited through this. Typically the following qualities would be required to acquire effective communication skills during attending the regular language lab sessions.
- The learners need to have the ability to comprehend all the instructions provided. This quality enables the learners to brush up their skills in articulating speech sounds with appropriate accent and intonation patterns.
- Need to grasp things properly in order to understand the problems while learning and seeking clarification from reliable and authentic sources.
- The learners need to have the ability to practice efficiently and effectively with passionate intensity.

- For more worthy comprehension the learners are expected to prepare notes in order to make use for future purpose.

In individual or as a group, the learners may have a great interaction with the contemporary language development through worthy activities as they get into regular practice will result in as:

- Develops better interactive approach and enables the communication process to fulfill the given task.
- Provides ample opportunities for the learners in familiarizing various communication patterns used in various contexts.
- Enable the learners to develop conflict clearance skills apart from effective interactive and interpersonal skills.
- Provides exposure towards different attitudes and establishes healthy rapport by building strong relations with colleagues in institutional level in near future.
- Enable to have strong foundation towards fixing tasks and firm goals with high confidence levels.
- Provides with adequate communication skills to work in any organization.
- Instills innovative thinking with positive attitude and enhances personality development.

In order to reach this, the learners have several barriers but they can overcome despite of several measures that can be adopted in feasible manner.

Some Related Barriers:

- First time exposure for the learners to the concepts of language lab activities and teaching learning modules especially for the students those who hail from L1 medium background.
- Regular monitoring on the language lab activities and to review is required immensely.
- The need for designing special projects for learners in order to develop communication skills and soft skills is a big task.
- Due to restricted time factor it is confined but not extensive to learn and acquire communication skills.
- Some other related barriers such as psychological, sociological and physiological barriers.

There are several suggestions have been proposed to make the task easy to enrich the lab activities to enrich effective communication skills among the students.

Advantages of English language lab activity in exchanged groups

- To assign project work in terms of giving the utmost benefit to the students in more competent and enthusiastic way.
- Make the students in small units with an ideal number of 6 or 8. Every 3 to 4 groups of students will be exchanged with other institutions.
- This is innovative for learners because the ambience for them is other than their own colleges. These groups will interchange with other selected clusters.
- This provides opportunities to the students not only to share knowledge but also understanding the environment in other institutions simultaneously.
- Another advantage is to understand the attitude of same level students in the vicinity and get them to:
 - Understand
 - Share
 - Interact
 - Assess
 - Respond and reciprocate each other in every situation
 - Refreshment and orientation with regular intimacy in group exchange programs

1.6 Recommendations/ Suggestions:

- In order to enrich effective communication skills through English language lab activities, both the students and teachers should have the passion towards achieving this goal.
- Regular monitoring is needed to review the activity work in the language labs.

- Testing and assessment process should be done efficiently.
- Regular feedback required from the learners.
- Continuous orientations and training sessions are immensely required for the concerned faculty members.
- Ambience should be in such a way to grow passion towards learning.
- Constant motivational lectures, debates, group discussions, quizzes, seminars and conferences should be conducted.
- Prioritizing the technology incorporation into language lab activities for the larger benefit of the learners.

1.7 Conclusion: Nowadays, effective communication and soft skills are inevitable to attain not only the attention of the world but to gain targets as desired by the corporate. In these circumstances, it is mandatory for the upcoming professionals to enrich in essential English skills which are considered vital, inevitable in terms of job searching in the neck deep competition of the professional world. Engineering education predominantly occupies larger part of professional career in changing the world of science and technology. An outcome of interacting and teaching English language and communication skills for engineering students for the past many years, a new dimension has been explored to develop communication competence among the students with activity based teaching communication. This chapter concludes in saying that the English language teacher is not just a teacher of following chalk and talk method; the English language teacher is expected to play an active role as a counselor, communication expert, soft skills trainer etc. The learners have to imbibe effective communication skills to reach great heights in their life.

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