

IMPORTANCE OF LANGUAGE LABORATORY IN TEACHING GRAMMAR

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ABSTRACT

Language teachers across the globe regard themselves as educators as much as specialists in the teaching of verbal skills. The shifting emphasis in language teaching in the last decades from the study of language as a discipline in itself and as an entry into the literature of another people towards a practical skill in performance has brought many changes in method and materials. It has stimulated an interest into the nature of language learning and emphasized the need for a much clearer picture of the component skill in linguistic performance.

In the traditional approach, learning and teaching were not analyzed and no effort was made to improve teaching. Early developments in teaching methods were based on the need to organize class teaching efficiency as possible. Soon as a result of the influence of new educational aims and theories of teaching and learning, newer methods were designed to foster the independence of students.

KEYWORDS: Need for the Present Study, Objectives, Limitations, Preparation of Pre-Test Tool, Selection, Preparation of Teaching Materials, Teaching Method, Analysis, Findings

INTRODUCTION

Effective language education stems from offering variety of learning opportunities and tools. Language teaching in the modern world has many different objectives. These are determined by what educational system requires, what the learner demands and what the teacher conceives to be his job. The teacher of today is considered as a creator and manager of simulating environment. Instruction leading to learning is in groups or individualized. Individualized programs consist of learning experiences specifically designed for the individual interests and needs. The availability of technology viz tape recorders, slide projectors, overhead projectors, video tape recorders as well as drawings, pictures, and even chalk board makes it possible for the language teacher to present language in more forms than just speech and print. One medium can be substituted for the other.

The language Lab has been, and will be for years to come, at the forefront of the language acquisition crusade. The language lab professionals are faced with the daunting task of having to design and reconstruct such facilities in order to keep pace with ever evolving technologies. The term Language Laboratory and the installation itself date back to 1924 when specialists in speech science at Ohio State University provided such equipment for the benefit of the students of Spanish language. It involved a central source for many sets of head-phones, the use of spaced pauses for student responses, and the possibility of individual recording and playback by students. There are many variables involved which help in efficient working of the Language Laboratory. The nature and quality of the recorded materials, the length and the frequency of laboratory periods, the presence or absence of a skilful teacher or 'monitor', the intangible but powerful factor of motivation, and the degree to which the laboratory materials supplement. As many factors are involved, research has been unable to provide definite conclusions, though considerable research has been undertaken in recent years. There are greater benefits in using such language laboratories, because it offers the students, the chance to work by themselves on language drills, monitored by the teacher from time to time.

Many developments in language teaching have evolved from growing awareness of the different mediums. With the advent of computers, there was a shift in the use of the equipment. Since the modern electronic computer is capable of rapid and precise control of a variety of pieces of equipment, it could present a programme of films, tape recordings, etc., according to an almost arbitrarily complex plan, and might, therefore be programmed to make instructional presentation to a individual or groups of people in a classroom. An essential factor in using computer as an aid to instruction is its capability to process natural language strings, to recognize the 'meaning' of what is said in a given context, and to make complex 'branching' decisions conditioned on the outcome of these processing. One of the reasons for making this choice is the great amount of exercise and drill work involved in learning language skills, the greatest part for which requires close supervision and frequent remedial correction for best results in learning. A probe into the researches carried out during the last three decades throw light on the fact that there has been little research attempted on the methods of teaching English at the college level and particularly using Language Laboratory for teaching of English. The present study is an attempt in this direction. An experimental study in teaching of grammar through Language Laboratory at College Level is a novel investigation

THE NEED FOR THE PRESENT STUDY

Though, the students are exposed to English and the grammatical patterns at the primary and secondary level of school educations, the performance of the students at the tertiary level is very low. They are unable to express even simple ideas in their own sentences. Though teaching community adopts various strategies to make teaching Grammar effective, it is not very pragmatic. Advance technology has paved way for the Language Laboratory which has opened the door for innovative methods of teaching grammar. The Language Laboratory has not been used much in teaching grammar. This study is expected to reveal the effectiveness of the Language Laboratory for Teaching Tenses. It is also expected that the study will result in the diagnosis of the learning problems in tenses confronting the college students. From the insights drawn from the findings of this investigation, the practicing teachers of English will be able to decide upon using Language Laboratory for teaching grammar in English and take up suitable remedial measures to remove the errors committed by the students in the uses of tenses.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following are the objectives of the present study

- To study the effectiveness of Dicto-comp as a testing tool
- To the study the effectiveness of Language Laboratory in teaching tenses
- To the study the effectiveness of Language Laboratory in teaching the present perfect tense
- To the study the effectiveness of Language Laboratory in teaching present perfect continuous tense

The Present Study is Based on the Following Expectations

- The present study is expected to reveal the effectiveness of Language Laboratory in teaching the uses of tenses at the college level.
- The present study is expected to reveal the effectiveness of Dicto-comp as a testing tool.
- The present study is expected to reveal the effectiveness of Language laboratory in teaching Present Perfect Tense and Present perfect Continuous Tense at the college level.

The findings of the present study will also enable the teachers of English at the college level to draw inferences and gain insights about the suitability of adopting Language Laboratory as a technology in Teaching English.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The present study has the following limitations:

- The study is confined to the First Year B.Tech. Students of Bhubaneswar Institute of Technology, Odisha.
- The study is restricted to assessing the effectiveness of using Language Laboratory in teaching tenses only.
- An analysis of the errors made by the students in tenses has not been made since the study is concerned with the effectiveness of using Language Laboratory in teaching tenses especially present perfect tense and present perfect continuous tense.
- A large sample has not been taken for the present study because the present study is an experimental study.
- A large number of construct could not be selected due to constrain of time.

It requires the selection of an appropriate experimental design, selection of sample to be subjected to proposed experiment, construction of tests to find out the specific abilities of the sample in uses of tenses; and preparation of appropriate teaching materials to be used in the Language Laboratory. In this study a sample of students from First Year B.Tech. Students, Bhubaneswar Institute of Technology, Odisha were selected and a pre-test was conducted to measure their entry level behavior in the area of uses of tenses. The sample was divided into Two-equated groups. Group A is used as Experimental Group and Group B as Controlled Group. The experimental group is exposed to instructional materials through Language Laboratory for a total number of Eight hours. After that, both the groups are subjected to a post-test in the correct uses of tenses. Finally, in the light of the comparison, the significance of the mean of the experimental group and the result of the **Student t test** are interpreted.

PREPARATION OF PRE-TEST TOOL

A test is used as a tool to measure the capabilities of the subjects. The following points are borne in the mind while selecting the test items:

- The objectivity of the appraisal tool
- Clear and unambiguous instruction
- Submission of the test drafts to a panel of professors of English for their consideration and suggestion for improvement.

There are 120 students admitted to the course belonging to both the sexes. Out of them 85 are women and 35 are men. A sample of 60 students was selected for creating Two-equated groups by administrating a pre-test.

SELECTION OF TESTING ITEMS FOR THE PRE-TEST

While making selection of the testing items for the pre-test,

- A number of standard books on grammar.
- The prescribed books of the primary and secondary level of school education published by the Government of Tamil Nadu to identify the list of teaching items.

A panel of experts was consulted

SELECTION OF THE TEST ITEMS

The objective of the pre-test is to gauge the entry-level behavior of the students' knowledge in the uses of tenses by placing them under error provoking situations. It provides a picture of the linguistic development of a learner in the specific area of grammar as well as his learning problems at a particular point of time.

Dicto-comp is a simple technique for controlled writing. Error provoking areas can be chosen as items for testing. These items are put into a short monologue. The students are asked to listen to the monologue and reproduce the same in writing. If the student has already learnt the items it will be present in his internal memory and he could recall while he writes if he listens to the monologue. But, he has not learnt the item; he would either substitute or omit the item. So, Dicto-comp was included as a testing tool.

SELECTION OF TEACHING ITEMS

Grammatical tenses have been taught, so far in isolation. The teachers of English teach the rules of each tense in isolation and their usage. Few tenses can be better perceived when they are taught in integration. A very little has been said and done in the teaching of integrated tenses.

Two Tenses Join Together to form Integrated Tenses

For Example

The Past Continuous Tense and the past tense

- When I was waking on the road, I saw an accident

The past perfect continuous tense and the past tense

- I had been playing cricket, when I saw the accident

The past perfect tense and the past tense

- When I reached the station, the train had already left.

The present perfect tense and the present perfect continuous tense

- Ram has been batting for twenty minutes. So far, he has scored 10 runs.

Including all the integrated tenses for the area of research would be abroad topic. Hence, the present perfect tense and the present perfect continuous tense were chosen for the experimental study.

PREPARATION OF TEACHING MATERIALS

The preparation of teaching material to be used for the Experimental group for the purpose of teaching tenses through Language Laboratory includes the following points:

- Selection of teaching items in terms of contexts in which the Present Perfect Tense and Present Perfect Continuous Tense is used.
- Preparation of necessary aids for teaching the items selected.

SELECTION OF TEACHING ITEMS

The selection of teaching items includes the various contexts in which the Present Perfect Tense and Present Perfect Continuous Tense are used. The testing items' for the pre-test have been based on the list of teaching items. So after consulting the panel of experts, teaching items for the proposed instructional program through Language Laboratory were prepared, bearing in mind the principles tested at the selection level.

PREPARATION OF TEACHING AIDS

The preparation of teaching aids include the following

- A Digital Language Laboratory consisting of 40 systems for individualized instruction.
- Power point presentation of the reading and listening materials with the listening materials recorded with the presentation.
- Relevant pictures to be used for recapitulation
- Construction of fool proof and non fool proof substitution tables for practice.

TEACHING METHOD

The teaching items selected and the aids prepared for the instructional program through the Language Laboratory constitute the teaching material. Every teaching unit planned by the investigator contains.

- A statement of objectives, both general and specific.
- A statement of specific teaching item to be presented.
- Situations to introduce the teaching items.
- Adequate substitution tables for providing practice in instructional patterns regarding the teaching item.
- Grammatical explanation involved in the teaching item.
- Exercises for recapitulation.

THE INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMME

Having created the equated groups for the experimental study and prepared the necessary instructional material, the instructional programme through Language Laboratory with the Experimental group was carried out. On each working day 60 minutes was set apart after the college hours for this purpose.

Thus, a total number of 8 working days with Experimental group, devoting 1 hour each day for instructional programme. All instruction sessions were held in the same room and at the same time of the day for the Experimental group.

CONSTRUCTION OF POST-TEST

The tool for the post-test was constructed, to find out the effectiveness of the instructional programme through Language Laboratory to the Experimental group in the uses of Present Perfect Tense and Present Perfect Continuous Tense after the instruction. This test was also administered to the Controlled group. Both the groups were administered the test at the same time. IT was constructed in the same manner in which the pre-test tool had been constructed.

SCHEME OF ANALYSIS

- An analysis of the post-test scores in terms of its average in percentage for both the groups
- The means of the gain scores of the pre-test and the post-test were calculated for both the groups.
- The combined standard deviation of the gain scores of the pre-test and the post-test of both the groups was calculated
- 't' value was worked out. An analysis in terms of the test of levels of significance between the means of the gain scores of the Experimental and the Controlled group has been made and the interpretation provided.

CALCULATION PROCEDURE

The sample is small, that is n 30, the so the Student t-test formulae was used for several calculation purposes.

The Student t test is generally used to test the significance of the various results obtained from small samples. Among the many types available the following type is used to find out the effectiveness of the experiment.

Testing Difference Between Means of Two samples (Independent Samples) (Test 2)

A SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The following findings have been drawn by the investigator after analyzing and interpreting the data:

Finding 1

From the calculation, it is concluded that the average percentage of achievement of the Experimental group in the present perfect tense is 88.7 and the controlled group is 25.3. So it is concluded that the performance of the Experimental group in the uses of present perfect tense is better than that of the Controlled group. Therefore, the Experimental group made significant progress in learning the uses of the present perfect tense after exposed to instructional material through Language Laboratory.

The student's t test value in the uses of present perfect tense is 13.04. It is greater than the 't' table value 2.71 at 0.01 level of significance. This supports the conclusion drawn above.

Hence, it is concluded that the teaching of the uses of present perfect tense through Language Laboratory is effective.

Finding 2

The average percentage of achievement of the Experimental group in the present perfect continuous tense is 88.7 and the controlled group is 26.7. Hence, it is concluded that the performance of the Experimental group in the uses of present perfect continuous tense is better than that of the Controlled group. Therefore, the Experimental group made significant progress in learning the uses of the present perfect continuous tense after exposed to instructional material through Language Laboratory.

The student's t test value in the uses of present perfect continuous tense is 11.68. It is greater than the t table value 2.71 at 0.01 level of significance. This confirms the conclusion drawn above.

It is therefore, concluded that the teaching of the uses of present perfect continuous tense through Language Laboratory is effective.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As a follow-up of this experiment, the following recommendations are made:

- The study has demonstrated the efficacy of Language Laboratory for teaching the uses of tenses at the college level. It is recommended that the Language Laboratory may be used effectively in the teaching of other skills of the language at the college level.
- The study has resulted in the construction of the pre-test and post-test tools to measure the abilities of the students in the specific area of the uses of tenses (before and after instruction) at a given point of time.

The tests serve two purposes.

- Dicto-comp can be used a tool to find out the performance of the learners at a given point of time.
- It can be used for diagnosing the learning difficulties of the learners in the uses of tenses.

It is recommended that Dicto-comp may be used by the practicing teachers of English to measure the students' ability in the uses of tenses and diagnose their learning efficiency in the uses of tenses.

SUGGESTIONS

The following appear to be some important areas for further investigation:

- It has emerged from the study that teaching of tenses through the Language Laboratory is effective at the college level.

It is suggested that the future investigators may take up a study of the effectiveness of Language Laboratory in teaching the following other skills;

- The uses of conditional clauses
- The uses of other forms of tenses
- The uses of articles, prepositions
- The usage of syntactic patterns.
- The present study has been conducted at Coimbatore Institute of Technology, Coimbatore. The same study can be conducted at different institutions. The results may confirm or refute the results of the present study.
- This study may be conducted to another group to find out whether the sex has any influence of the learning capabilities of the students.
- This study may also be conducted to another group to find out whether the nativity of the students (rural or urban) has any role in the learning capabilities of the students.
- This experiment may be conducted on the passive form of the tenses, as this study had been done on the active form of the tenses.

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