

ROLE OF LANGUAGE LABORATORY FOR IMPROVING COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Sanjiban Roy

Department of Basic Science and Humanities, Dr. B. C. Roy Polytechnic, Durgapur – 713206, West Bengal, India. Email id : sanjiban.roy@brec.ac.in

Abstract : *Effective communication skill is essential for success in every stages of life. An individual's communication skills can distinguish and mark the journey of one's life achievements. The ability to communicate well is the most important criteria for getting a placement in an organisation or institution. As technology has become an inseparable part of our life, it helps us to learn as well as improve different skills. Communication too, is not an exception. To learn, master and improve communication skill, Language Laboratory plays an important role. This paper focuses on communication skill and its different aspects and how language lab can be an effective medium for improving this skill.*

Keywords : *Communication skill, Language Laboratory, Successful professional, Technological aid.*

1. INTRODUCTION :

“Communication is one of the most important skills you require for a successful life.”

Catherine Pulsifer

People often believe that communication means speaking in English. It is a misconception. English is a language, whereas, communication is a skill. Communication is an art, that can be learnt and developed. To develop communication, efforts need to be put in. One needs to practice, work hard, there is no short cuts. One needs good role models as well as techniques for learning. Technology sometimes becomes immensely helpful in acquiring these skills. We only need to know how to use this to get desired outcomes. Language Laboratory can be immensely helpful, not only for learning but also in improving communication skill.

The more one practises, the more comfortable he becomes. Apart from the ability to convey ideas properly, one needs to concentrate on the following aspects as well – eye contact, body language, voice quality, assertiveness, being proactive etc, as these too are integral part of communication. One needs to increase reading – practice writing- watch good communicators and listen to good audio as brain has so many ways to receive information.

2. COMMUNICATION: ORIGIN AND DIFFERENT ASPECTS :

The word “Communication”, originates from the Latin word ‘*communico*’ or ‘*communicare*’ which means – “to share.”[1] Communication is the process of conveying information in such a way that the message is received and understood. Through communication, one can share ideas, opinions, facts and thoughts with others. Like any other skill, good communication is a skill one can use throughout his life. Communication is often categorized as an important ‘*soft skill*’ and ‘*interpersonal skill*’.

Communication is based on four forms and skills --- *Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing*. (LSRW). When we learn a language, specially English, these four interrelated skills should be given equal importance. Successful communicators are almost always good listeners.

Listening helps us to pronounce words correctly. To express himself fluently one needs to improve his **Speaking** ability.

Reading helps us to understand words and subject matter clearly. Good writing skill is important for flawless and creative **Writing**. It helps the learner to arrange and elaborate on ideas and present them clearly.

Among these four interrelated skills, Listening and Reading are known as receptive skills, whereas, Speaking and Writing are referred to as productive ones.

About the importance of these skills, Sir Francis Bacon, the English philosopher and writer once said,

“Reading maketh a full man, Conference a ready man and Writing an exact man.”

To be a good communicator and a successful professional, one needs to learn and practice these skills simultaneously.

3. COMMUNICATION : PROCESS AND CLASSIFICATION

Communication is a dynamic process which begins with the conceptualizing/conceiving of ideas by the sender, who then transfers the message through a channel to the receiver. The entire process goes through the following way :

a) Source/ Sender : A source or sender is one of the basic concepts of communication. A sender may be a person or group or organization that has a message to share with another person.

b) Message : A message is an idea, information or experience that a sender wants to communicate verbally or non-verbally. It can be oral, written, symbolic or non-verbal such as body movement, gestures, silence, sigh or any signal.

c) Encoding : (developing a message is known as Encoding). It is basically the conversion of the message into groups of symbols that represent the ideas or concepts that will be communicated. In this process, the sender develops the message and uses certain words or non-verbal methods to translate the information.

[The sender's knowledge, skills, perception, background, competencies etc. have a great impact on the success of the message.]

d) Channel/medium : it is the means of carrying an encoded message from the source to the receiver.

e) Receiver : The receiver can receive the message in the form of hearing, seeing, feeling etc.

f) Decoding : (interpreting the message is known as Decoding). It is the process by which the receiver interprets the symbols (coded message) sent by the source by converting them into concepts and ideas.

[**Noise :** Disturbance or interference that affects any or all stages of the communication process.]

g) Feedback : This is the final step of communication process. It refers to the receiver's response to the sender's message. [that is directed back to the original source (sender), who becomes a receiver. It increases the effectiveness of communication.]

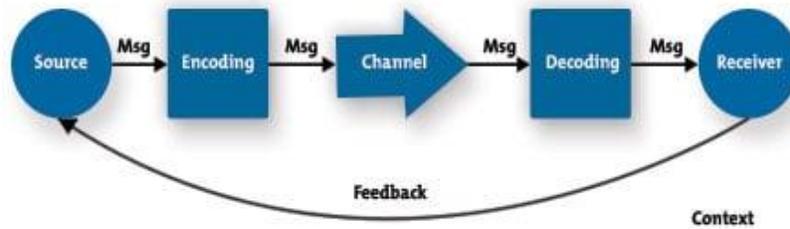


Figure 1. Communication Process

Communication can be divided into three basic types –

A) Verbal Communication : It is one of the most common types – often used during presentations, video conferences , phone calls, meetings and one-on-one conversations. (Here, we listen to a person to understand the meaning of his speech) In this type, we communicate with others through speech.

B) Non-Verbal Communication :(we observe a person and try to understand meaning). It is the use of body language, gestures, symbols, sign language, facial expressions to convey informations to others.

C) Written Communication : (Here, we read a written document and try to understand meaning). Written messages in letters, typing or printing, notice, e-mail, fall under this category.

Based on style and purpose, there are two main categories of communication ---

1) Formal Communication : In this type of communication, certain rules, regulations, conventions and principles are followed. Here, use of slang and foul languages is avoided. Use of correct pronunciation and proper manners are strictly followed.

Example: usually classroom communication, conferences, seminars, corporate meetings, interviews fall under this category.

2) Informal Communication : It is the casual or unofficial form of communication among friends, family members, club members and relatives. It does not follow strict rules, regulations, system or formalities. Generally, informal communication is done orally and using gestures.

4. LANGUAGE LABORATORY : CONCEPT

The Language laboratory is an audio or audio-visual installation used as an aid in modern language teaching as well as improving communication skill.[2] It can be found in different educational institutes like – schools, colleges and universities. As technology has become an inseparable part of our life, in the field of communication too, it plays a significant role. It provides required technological aid in the improvement of communication. Now-a-days, communication has become the prerequisite for anyone who ventures into a new profession. Language laboratory provides certain advantages which are not otherwise feasible in a normal classroom.



Figure 2. Language Laboratory

Language Laboratory is basically a self-improvement aid which also helps teachers in imparting communication skills. It is, however, an aid of a different kind from those hitherto available. The primary purpose of the Language Laboratory is to enable every student to obtain maximum practice in the time available. It provides ample scope for this practice in the given time. The usefulness of Language Laboratory depends upon the availability, quality and utilisation of the teaching material. The positive aspect is that, before the session, careful planning, organized and advance recording is possible.

5. IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF LANGUAGE LAB

- A. Language Laboratory is the place where student can feel free from the embarrassment and awkwardness of the classroom.
- B. The teacher can focus his attention on the individual student's performance.
- C. This lab helps the learner to be his own examiner. It provides authentic and model examples of speech for practice. For practising comprehension passages also, pre-installed materials could be of immense help.
- D. It is always desirable that language lab can be used as a medium for teaching the right grammatical structure, pronunciation, other aspects such as intonation and accents.
- E. It can also be utilised to expand vocabulary, learning different words and their usage as well as expressions.

Generally in a Language Laboratory, classes are conducted dividing the students in groups. For example, a lab with 20-25 students with each provided with individual computer, headphone is an ideal set up. Language Laboratory offers a variety of opportunities to make the session interesting for the learners, like –

- i) It helps students develop good listening skills which is an essential part of communication. As they listen to different audio-visual content, it helps them to learn correct pronunciation using headphones.[3]
- ii) Learning lab systems provide interest and excitement to the students. They participate in the activities more attentively.
- iii) Unlike regular classroom, the teacher can monitor individual students effectively and communicate.
- iv) It provides internet facility to individual student and help them get connected with the world.
- v) Apart from the teacher as communicator, the lab provides the students with a variety of model voices.

vi) Language Laboratory gives the opportunity to overcome the shyness some students feel during normal classroom teaching. It encourages and motivates them to speak freely without hesitation. [4]

vii) In a Language Laboratory, teacher becomes more an instructor and facilitator. Unlike the repetitive verbal lecture oriented teaching in regular classroom, students get variety.

viii) With different facilities available, activities like Role Playing and Group Discussions can be performed in the language lab. Students can be paired or grouped together in small numbers and hold conversational practice with each other. [5]

ix) In Language lab, the teacher has a provision for using projector to make the class more interesting.

x) And finally, the peaceful atmosphere of the lab is not only helpful for the teacher to conduct classes but also provides opportunity for the student to learn properly with interest and attention.

6. CONCLUSION :

Communication is not only an important ‘soft skill’ or ‘interpersonal skill’ but it is in fact a ‘life skill’ which helps us to lead our life in a positive manner. The quality of learning increases when the learner learns it with technological aid. Language Laboratory can provide a great deal of exciting and interesting works as well as infrastructural facilities not only for the students who wish to improve communication, but also for the instructor.

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