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ICT in Teaching English Language in Rural Government Schools

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Abstract:-The paper aims to bring an awareness of using technology in teaching the English language to the primary and secondary school students - especially to the rural Government school students- use, utilization and result of using Digital Language Laboratory in Rural Government Schools is discussed.

Keywords: *skills, teaching, technology, quality, education.*

I. INTRODUCTION

In ancient times students stayed in the residences of Gurus- the teachers and did all the services for their teachers and acquired life-skills and attained knowledge, necessary for their future. Be it a prince or a layman the rules were same. Along with the skills and other arts, they learnt the languages, and other necessary life-skills, which were acquired by the Gurus. Learning came as naturally as any other habit. But the whole system of education changed slowly due to historical invasions and scientific inventions. Later on due to the colonisation of the British and the introduction of Christian missionaries, the system of education saw a drastic change; new methodologies, new techniques reflecting the English methodology of teaching was followed. In spite of many advantages in English methodology of education and positive changes due to the modern methodologies, the standard of education liquidated in due course of time.

The crowded strength in the class liquidated the standard of teaching. Innovative techniques, modern methodologies and other training definitely had an impact on the teaching- but as teachers are in the position to complete their syllabus in the stipulated time, standard in education remains interrogative.

These days there is a need for continuous change in all the fields and education is not spared. Teachers as well as students face many challenges and changes that take place in the society. Hence, there is a need for innovation. Changes take place in imparting the language also. Apart from grammar translation method of teaching in the language teaching, play way method, activity based learning method and peer group teaching method-are followed in the classroom. However, most frequently chalk-talk method is followed in the classroom.

In spite of the efforts taken by the education department and the teachers, students fail to learn the language well. Even at the higher education level, students struggle to read, write or speak the language properly. It is very difficult to evaluate the students' level of understanding the language. Of course, there is no problem in evaluating the language when it comes to reading, writing and speaking; but the listening part, which is more essential, is not evaluated, since at a lower level we have not found a technique, though it is done at the higher levels.

At present in almost all the Government schools follow Activity Learning Methodology. From standard one to five, examination is not conducted for any subjects; their standard of learning is assessed based on the activity they partake in the class and their performance throughout the year. From standard six up to twelfth standard, conventional methods of teaching is followed. Teachers prepare their students for examination.

II. PROBLEMS FACED BY TEACHERS IN USING TECHNOLOGY

In the use of modern technology in teaching, especially in teaching of the English Language, the most common problem the teachers face is the time constraint. Teachers do not have enough time to teach their planned teaching item in the classroom, where they get only 45 minutes duration per subject. Next, few others face the problem of lack of time in learning the technology itself for teaching. It is not that only the science teachers need technical skills or knowledge of technology; language teachers too need the technical skills and the knowledge of the technology. We could feel a gap between the development of the new technologies and in the implementation of those technologies in the field of education in Tamilnadu. Perhaps, few CBSC schools, International Schools, ICSE use technology in teaching the English Language, to the minimum. But we rarely see any rural Government school teachers using technology in their curriculum.

In a survey, it was found that there is only one computer for strength of 1500 students and in few schools where computers and internet facilities are not available. In almost all the schools taken for research there is no usage of LCDs or projectors. Even if facilities are available, the frequency of utilising the technology is very rare.

It is true that a steel instructor cannot replace the human teacher. But, it is also a fact that machines can do wonders – create an interest in learning, the visual and audio aids play a very vital role in imparting any language.

There are various other factors for the teachers, which act as a hindrance in using the technologies. A large classroom that contains more than 50 is not an ideal one for using audio-visual aids, computers, or any technical devices. The students cannot have a first-hand experience where there is only one equipment; also, there must be consistency in the usage of any technology. Otherwise, the students are likely to forget both the modules taught and the methods of using the technology as well.

In the backward rural area like Gobichettipalayam and the surrounding villages, there is hardly any exposure for the parents about the language, its importance and about the technology. In such a case, even if a teacher uses the high technology, parents do not understand the importance of using the technology or few other times they misunderstand that schools do not teach what is in the syllabus; they believe that their wards have to get a high percentage of marks in their exams. They fail to realise the necessity of skill based learning- which is an essential one in the employment market later. In few other rural villages in Tamil nadu, where economic condition is very poor, where parents are illiterates, enrol their children in the schools only for the free food and other necessities and in such places technology, innovation and ICT based learning are out of question. It's a real challenge for the teachers, especially the teachers who teach foreign language, to gather the students to one aim-to position their attention for one target- i.e.- imparting the foreign language to the students.

III. DIGITAL LANGUAGE LAB

Before going into the actual research, data were collected from schools in and around Gobichettipalayam, Tamilnadu, in order to study and analyse the methodology already followed in the existing system and how far the new methodology would help them in learning a language. English language teachers from the schools of the rural areas were selected for understanding the students' interest in learning the language.

IV. A BRIEF PROFILE OF THE SCHOOLS SELECTED FOR STUDY

- Government Higher Secondary **School, Getticheviyur**, in Gobichettipalayam has strength of 1500 students with 25 teachers. All the students hail from a poor economic background and most of them first generation students. There are well-trained teachers, but due to the poor economic background, most of the students go for part time job in the evening and during the week- ends. Hence, the drive for studying well is very less. Also, the school has a very less infrastructure facilities. Only through the efforts taken by the staff members, the school is able to produce 100% result in 10th standard and 95% result in the twelfth standard.
- Panchayat Union Primary School, Annur.
- Panchayat Union Primary School, Mugasemsampatti, Pogalur.
- Panchayat Union Primary School, Kannadankulampudur.
- All the above schools have strength of 150 students and two staff members each. Activity based learning method is followed in these schools. All these schools are primary schools and could not be analysed fully.
- Government Higher Secondary School, Rajan Nagar, BhavaniSagar.
- The school is situated in BhavaniSagar, Sathyamangalam. It has strength of around 2000 students and 78 staff members. Most of the students come from a good background as most of the parents are working parents.
- Government Higher Secondary School, Kuhaloor, Gobichettipalayam. There are 14 teachers for around 800students and most of the students come from a good economic background and many parents are working parents.

Almost all the schools taken for research study are situated in the remote villages in and around Gobichettipalayam. With minimum infrastructure facilities and teaching faculty. Most of the students are first generation learners who have very few

opportunity of knowing the importance of the language and hence lack interest in learning the language. Their environment and the family background do not create a platform for learning. Their English class is the only place where these students listen, read and write English. But in such classes also, speaking the language is very less.

In spite, of the technological advancements, the rural government schools seldom use technology for imparting the language. Especially, the schools chosen for research do not have any technical or technological advancement for teaching the foreign language.

Language laboratory becomes effective only if there are integrated materials composed by the language teachers. Language lab not only motivates the learners to speak, but it motivates them on various learning factors also.

It has always been accepted that foreign language teachers who are not native speakers of English are likely to make mistakes in their pronunciation since they follow the Received Pronunciation. The family background, the place where he comes from, the English foundation he received during his education, everything impacts his class-room teaching. Even after years of learning English at school and collegiate level, we find few language teachers making mistakes in using lexis, grammar, intonation and pronunciation. Such teachers will not be a good role model for students. At the same time, as a language teacher he is in a position to teach the language effectively and efficiently without any error. Here, English Language lab comes as an angel to this paradoxical situation.

The researcher experimented a new teaching methodology using the language laboratory.

Some Modules used for the research in the Digital Language Lab

- grammar and vocabulary
- report writing
- Honing their listening, speaking and voice modulation through Virtual Voice Recorder
- Conversational practice
- Typing master

S.no	Modules	Target group	Skills focussed
1	Typing Master	9 th standard	Writing
2	Homophones	8 th standard	Speaking & Listening
3	Vocabulary	7 th standard	Writing, & Reading
4	Conversational practice	6 th &7 th standard	Listening, & speaking

- Any language learning would be incomplete if all the four skills - Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing are not given equal importance. Lab facilitates these four skills.
- The module - typing master helps the learners in developing their listening and writing skills. Students look at the screen for vocabulary; when they select a word, they hear the pronunciation of the selected word. Later they type the word they heard and saw. For every right answer, the computer gives them mark and if the students make mistakes, the system gives them a negative marking.
- The same set of students, i.e. 9th standard students, was assigned one more module, Homophones, where the students acquired the skills of speaking and listening.
- Students of 8th standard were assigned vocabulary, where the students learnt the vocabulary. Later they were asked to develop a story using the given vocabulary. The students were motivated to learn the ability of writing and reading to a certain extent.
- The last module, conversational practice was given to the class of 6th students. Using the head – phones, the students listened to the modules. In the beginning, they were unable to comprehend anything. Later they felt happy to listen to the language with a different pronunciation. The students are to speak back whatever they heard on the computer.

Feedback

The rural students are used to the same routine of Activity based Learning Methodology or talk and chalk method. Either they memorize everything for the purpose of getting marks or for the sake of just learning. Language laboratory is a gift for the students of the schools, where they could learn the tongue of the native speakers. Though they did not master the language skills, the expected interest in learning was received. Only the interest will keep the fire burning. Wherever there is interest, there is result.

During the one year of study, the researcher found out that there was a tremendous shift in the students' attitude towards learning and in the growth of learning as well.

V. FEED BACK ANALYSIS OF THE LANGUAGE LAB EXPERIENCE

No	Name of the schools	Strength	Feedback (in numbers & %)			
			Unable to understand	Interesting	Not able to say anything	Able to understand
1	Government Hr. Sec. School, Getticheviyur	60	30 (50)	15 (25)	5 (8.33)	10 (16.6)
2	PanchayatUnion Primary School, Annur.	18	5 (27.7)	4 (22.2)	2 (11.1)	7 (38.8)
3	PanchayatUnion Primary School, Mugasemsampatti, Pogalur.	27	9 (33.3)	5 (55.5)	1 (3.70)	2 (7.4)
4	PanchayatUnion Primary School, Kannadankulampudur.	15	6 (40)	4 (26.6)	2 (13.3)	3 (20)
5	Government Hr. Sec.School, Kugaloor.	60	25 (41.6)	20 (33.3)	5 (8.3)	10 (16.6)
6	Government Hr... Sec.School,RajanNagar, BhavaniSagar.	65	15 (23.07)	20 (30.76)	5 (7.69)	25 (38.46)
	TOTALSTRENGTH	245	90 (36.73)	8 (31.83)	20 (8.16)	7 (23.26)

- In Government Hr. Sec. School, Getticheviyur, out of 60 students 50% of the students were unable to understand; 25% of the students felt it was an interesting experience to learn using the computer in the language laboratory. 8.33% of the students did not give any opinion about the lab and 16.67 % of the students understood the concept of working on the lab and also felt interesting.
- Out of 18 students from Panchayat Union primary School, Annur, 27.77% students were not able to understand anything from the language lab, 22.22 % of students showed interest in learning using technology, 11.11% of the students were not able to express anything and 38.88 % of the students were not able to understand what was taught in the laboratory.
- 27 students attended the language laboratory during the research period from Panchayat Union School, Pogalur. Out of the 27 students 33.33% of the students were unable to understand the techniques, whereas 55.56% of the students found lab work interesting, 3.7% students did not show any opinion, and 7.40% were able to understand the technology.
- Out of 15 students from the Panchayat Union Primary School of Kannadankulampudur, 40% of the students were unable to understand the technology, 26.6% of the students found it interesting, 13.3 % of the students were not able to say anything, and remaining 20% were able to understand the technology clearly.
- 60 students from Government Higher Secondary School, Kugaloor attended the training session. Out of 60 students, 41.6 % of the students were unable to comprehend the technology, 33.33% felt the laboratory as an interesting place to learn, 8.33 % of the students were not able to tell any opinion and 16.67 % of the students were able to understand the language using computer.
- Government Higher Secondary School, Rajan Nagar, BhavaniSagar had 65 students. Out of them 23.07 % of the students were not able to understand how to learn through computer, 30.76 % of the students felt it interesting, 7.69% of the students were not able to give any opinion and 38.47 % of the students were able to understand the language lab modules.

To be precise the four columns in the table converge into two: ‘Able to understand’ resulting into ‘Interesting’ to learn a foreign language, and ‘Unable to understand’ constraining the learners to say anything about the efficiency of the language laboratory methodology to learn a foreign language.

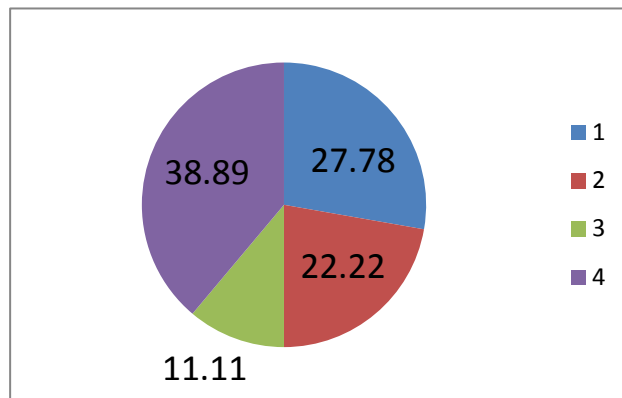
The two columns ‘Able to understand’ (23.26%) and ‘Interesting’ (31.84%) constitute 55.10% of the sample population, whereas the remaining two columns ‘Unable to understand’ (36.74%) and ‘not able to say anything’ (8.16%) represent 44.90% of the respondents.

As 55.10% of the sample population are positive about the new experiment administered on rural students, the researcher has no hesitation to conclude that the first attempt itself is a success on non-tech savvy ruralities and when the same experiment is

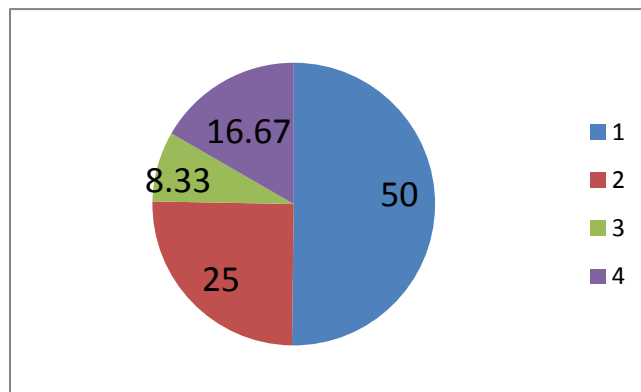
repeated majority of the rural learners will find the technology acceptable and the purpose of learning a foreign language through language laboratory can be achieved.

Feedback Analysis of the Language Lab Experience

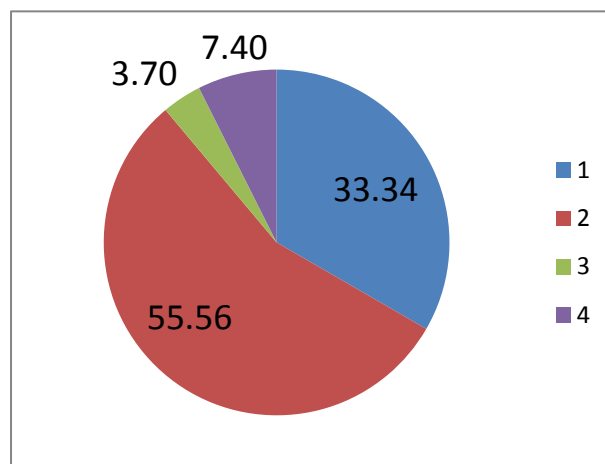
1. Government Higher Secondary School, Getticheviyur



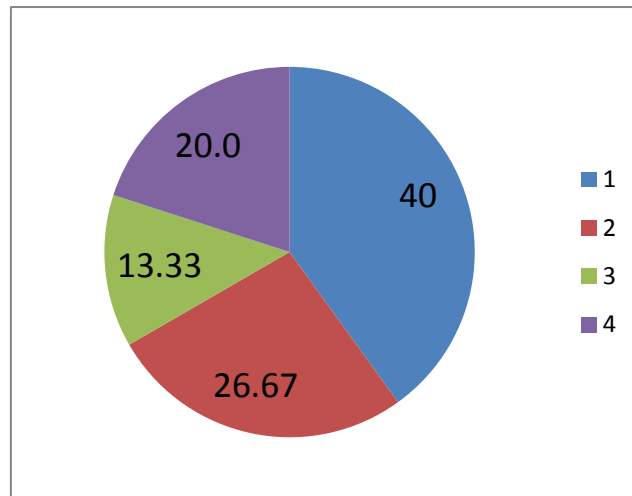
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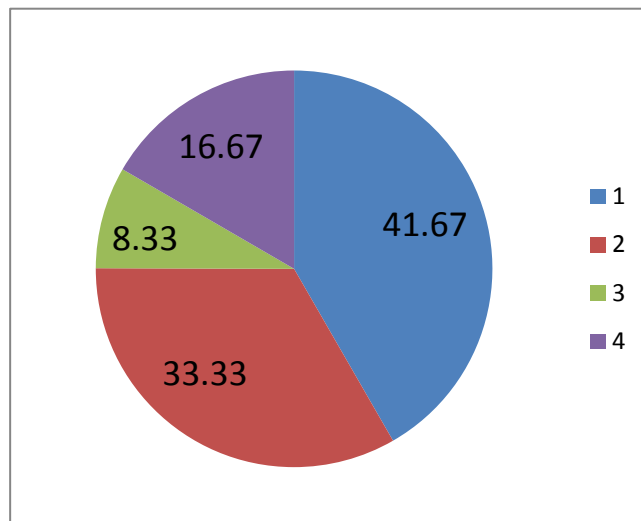
3. Panchayat Union Primary School, Mugasemsampatti, Pogalur.



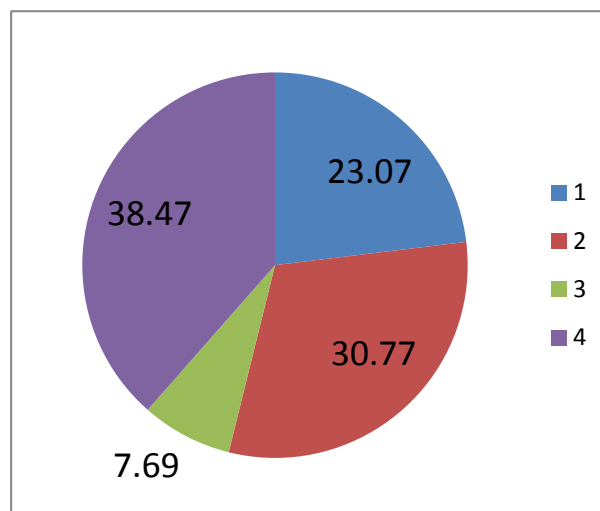
4. Panchayat Union Primary School, Kannadankulampudur



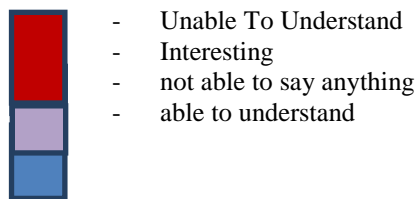
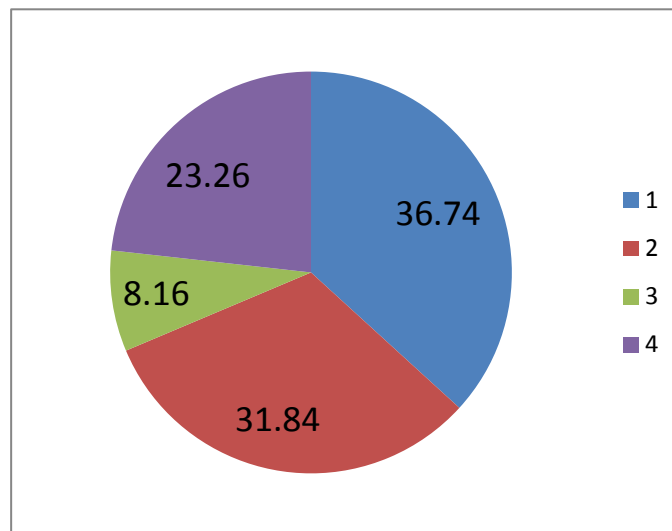
5. Government Higher Secondary School, Kugaloor.



6. Government Higher Secondary School, Rajan Nagar, BhavaniSagar.



7. Complete Assessment



Language teaching and learning is an interesting task. It is in the hands of the teachers whether to make it interesting or uninteresting. Digital Language Lab creates an interest and opportunity to learn the language. Enhancing the skills of using the technology, both for the teachers and students, is the prime necessity. In future, language teachers will be in need of using only technology based learning and now there is a need for revamping the curriculum. Training the teachers not only in teaching but also in using various technologies in teaching of the language is the need of the hour. Curriculum designers also must frame the syllabus in such a way that the use of ICT is incorporated in the teaching. Care must be taken to set Computers, LCDs, internet facilities and other technologies in the schools, as equipment is inevitable if a teacher likes to use technology based teaching.

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