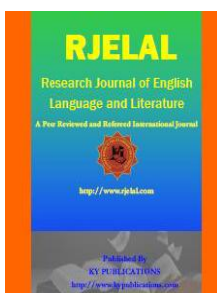**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

EFFECTIVE USE OF MULTIPLE RESOURCES FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

In today's highly competitive era, where employability is the buzzword, proficiency in English has become necessary rather than an option. English being the lingua franca in workplaces and elsewhere, the need to possess effective language skills cannot be undermined. The changing demands of the industry, global work ambience and diversified work force have all necessitated the need for having a command over the language. Several media reports and surveys invariably point to the lack of effective language skills among the students for the prevailing underemployment. With language, being a tool for reaching out to people, one needs to learn the language so as to put it to the best use in various situations. The ability to communicate with ease is one of the most important traits expected of a professional. This paper focuses on the use of "multiple language learning resources" for wholesome and effective language acquisition

Learning of a language is a continuous activity that demands the use of various tools and resources. Learning can neither be confined to the four walls of a classroom nor be imparted wholly through books. Theoretical lectures on grammar and syntax of a language can never ensure complete language learning or reach out to learners effectively and make them linguistically competent. The learning of a language can be pleasant and fruitful only when the "language learning tools" are utilised to the optimum by the learners to attain linguistic proficiency. The outcome of learning a language is to make effective use of the language in various contexts.

In today's highly competitive and globalised scenario, where employability is the catchword, proficiency in English is necessary. With English becoming the "lingua franca" in both workplace and elsewhere, the need for employees to possess effective language skills cannot be undermined. A survey by **Aspiring Minds** and published in THE HINDU Education Plus dt. 30.7.2012 points to the low level of English learning among engineering graduates. It also states that "around 36 percent of engineering graduates would be unable to read official reports and transcripts and derive information out of them, even when the information is explicitly stated."

If this lacuna of not possessing effective communication skills has to be rectified, learners need to adopt a systematic and not a piecemeal approach in learning a language. Mere theoretical acquisition of knowledge would not suffice because learners more often use the language practically in various situations like attending a call, raising queries, making enquiries, interacting with some one and so on. Hence it is incumbent on the part of the learners to acquire the skills required for the practical use of a language.

Resources for Language learning

Newspapers, classroom activities, language laboratories, documentaries, Internet are some of the resources that learners can turn to for improving their language prowess. Activities like debates, role plays, discussions, conversations performing tasks, taking up presentations in classrooms will foster a spirit of learning and inquisitiveness among the learners. These activities will provide a level-playing field for the participants to participate and shed their inhibitions and be at ease with the language. Activities such as extempore and mock interviews make "users" of the language independent and creative in using their own words apt for the contexts and create a friendly and congenial atmosphere for participation. If learners are made to learn a language through activities, they would be able to acquire language and vocabulary skills quickly and use them elsewhere.

Classroom activities as tools for language learning

Some of the advantages of using classroom activities as tools are: a) the learners will learn the know-how of using a language b) flexibility- they can learn at their own convenience and pace c) they can learn according to their level of understanding and devoid of any pressure d) they will develop their vocabulary skills. These activities can motivate, stimulate and enhance the language skills of the learners. Debates, discussions, presentations, role plays and so on provide autonomy for the learners and make them creative and lateral thinkers. The activities are more "learner-centric" than "teacher-centric."

Activities-based learning uses language to perform meaningful tasks both within and outside classrooms (like attending **an interview, seeking an audience with a doctor, calling customer service, attending a call).** Language is used as an instrument to complete and fulfil activities. The effectiveness of the language depends on the completeness of the activities. The activities reflect real life situations and learners focus on meaning and are free to use any language they want. **Playing a game, solving a problem, sharing information or experience** are some task-based learning methods. Activities like **field survey, interviewing people, group discussion,**

organising events, reporting, and role plays go a long way in sharpening communication skills.

Language learning will become effective only when the teachers engage the learners and make the classroom sessions interactive. By assigning various activities and allowing learners to participate in them, the teachers instil confidence in them; enable them to work both as a team and as individuals and thereby helping them indirectly in learning a language. With the sweeping changes that are taking place in the educational front, it is indeed quite a challenge for any language teacher to develop the language skills of the learners and make them articulate and expressive. Involvement of learners in the classroom will go a long way in making them communicate in myriad situations with ease.

Role playing is one of the effective methods for language learning. It encourages creativity and thinking skills, lets the learners' develop and practise language skills in a congenial and conducive ambience. It creates motivation among learners and ensures the participation and involvement necessary for language learning. When learners are made to enact/take up different roles, they will get to understand the language and employ it according to the role that they play. For example let's take the case of a patient seeking an appointment with a dentist or an employer interviewing an employee, or a student enquiring about a course in a college and so on.

Promotion of language skills through Media

Media, being one of the most enriching sources of information and knowledge, plays a proactive role in enhancing the language learning abilities of the learners. It develops their language prowess by offering opportunities to sharpen their LSRW skills. A learner can be called "linguistically competent" only when he/she knows to use the four language skills contextually and effectively. The print media, especially newspapers, kindles the creativity and spurs the learners' imagination so as to become innovative and "out –of the box" thinkers. The puzzles, crosswords that appear in newspapers will improve the vocabulary skills and enhance the language learning abilities. Being accessible and

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"user friendly", media acts as a platform for peer learning.

"Reading maketh a full man, conference a ready man and writing an exact man" says Francis Bacon in his *Of Studies*. Newspapers inculcate the reading habit in the learners thereby improving their linguistic skills. They nurture the learners' writing skills by providing opportunities to write in the editorials on a host of issues or in columns meant for writing stories or poems. As catalysts, newspapers enable the learners to acquire effective language skills.

The electronic media, especially TV provides a gamut of opportunities for the learners to hone their language skills by enabling them to participate in debates, talk shows, discussions and so on. Programmes on BBC help the learners to understand the British accent while programmes on NDTV like "The Big Fight" and CNN-IBN "Devil's Advocate" assist the learners in developing their critical thinking and analytical skills.

One needs to be a good listener if one wants to be a good communicator. If a learner wishes to master a language, then he or she has to fine-tune his/ her listening skills. Radio plays a vital role in developing the learners' listening skills by airing various educational programmes. These programmes will help the listeners to understand how a language is being used in various situations outside the classrooms. They will get to also understand the vocal characteristics (tone, tenor, pitch) when using a language. Documentaries and films also aid in learning a language. Learners can be made to write film reviews or analyse films which will help them to hone their critical thinking skills and polish their writing abilities.

Technology-driven language learning

With technology ruling the roost and new innovations/inventions in the field taking the world by storm, it would only be appropriate to integrate technology with the teaching –learning methods. Modern tools like smart classrooms, language laboratories, multimedia projectors and others supplement the conventional teaching-learning by providing ample opportunities for the learners to develop their language skills and become "linguistically competent". The Internet aids the language learners in communicating in English with other learners without any inhibitions. It is not an exaggeration to say that Internet has penetrated into every nook and corner and its reach is wide and far-reaching. Being the "repository of information and knowledge", it has numerous sites/websites for improving vocabulary, developing comprehension, listening and analytical skills. Learners can turn to them for developing their vocabulary, comprehension and LSRW skills.

Internet assists learners in improving their retention and cognitive skills. It assures easy accessibility of information, is time unbound, caters to the different types of users (primary, secondary, tertiary), and offers flexibility and option to learn at the learners' convenience and understanding of a concept. Websites like www.about.com, www.bbc.co.uk, www.usingenglish.com, www.onestopenglish.com,www.britishcouncil.org.in to cite a few, will help the learners to access the required information depending on whether they are beginners or advanced. Pushplata and Sanjaykumar in "Technology Enabled Teaching of Professional Communication Courses: Problems and Perspectives" observe:

"…… the appropriate use of OHP, LCD, Language laboratory and computer technology in communication courses will help to enhance learners' autonomy, develop fluency in speaking and improve proficiency in writing among students…" (33)

Computer-Aided Language Laboratories

The advent of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has given way to the emergence of modern tools for language learning. With technological innovations being the order of the day, being computer-savvy is no longer an option but rather a necessity. To be in consonance with the sweeping technological changes and to stay afloat, it is imperative on the part of the learners to use "technology-driven teaching" to the optimum to achieve the desired results. The four basic skills required for attaining proficiency in English are Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing (LSRW). These skills need to be

mastered in the given order so as to become fluent and communicate with ease in English.

Language laboratories serve the above said purpose of honing the language skills of the learners by providing opportunities to listen to passages, to speak, to read texts and to write assignments and to record and repeat the exercise. They equip the learners with confidence to communicate in English with ease and élan. The labs offer various modules on phonetics, grammar, comprehension, vocabulary and so on. A number of softwares are available to enhance the "employable skills" of the learners. Students can listen to pre-recorded passages, listen to the questions and record their answers in their voice. They can play it again and identify their flaws (in pronunciation or accent) and rectify accordingly.

Conventional classrooms vs language laboratories

Some of the limitations of classroom learning are a) inhibits effective communication b) scope for incorrect pronunciation c) inability to comprehend native accents and idioms d) not much an exposure to various auditory resources. English being a non-native/ foreign language or secondary language (ESL) for many a learner, the pronunciation of some words might be confusing. With the aid of accessories like mike, headphone, audio and video recording provisions, learners can practice pronunciation of words. This way, the learners can get to know the right pronunciation of words.

The benefits of using language labs are: a) there will less monotony and boredom b) will motivate and stimulate the learners to use English effectively c) lessons will be appealing and interesting and c) learners will be exposed to new features and innovations d) will evoke/kindle the learners' interests and e) will bring in more variety to classrooms. Even though technology-driven can never be a substitute for classroom learning, the efficacy of the labs in honing the language skills of the learners cannot be undermined. The process of acquiring a language is a step-by step one that calls for the involvement of all stakeholders, including teachers and learners of a language. Only when the learners participate effectively by utilising various resources the outcome will be efficacious and fruitful. The ambience for language learning should be "congenial and friendly" so that the outcome

would be fruitful and productive. It is indeed outcome-based learning of a language that would yield the desired results with the learners becoming "linguistically competent."

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