

## How Language Laboratory Overcomes Human Limitations in Teaching English

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### Abstract

Today teaching learning process is almost hi-tech and fast. There is a great role of technological tools in education process. Many educators have welcomed this advancement with open arms while some have criticized it. Man has invented machines to make the work faster and easier. In the initial phase the use of ICT was restricted up to industries and other professional groups. After the revolution in IT and computer field people started using it almost every field including medical and education. The latest mode of language teaching and learning is language laboratories. Due to transportation and IT mankind has become more mobile than ever before. This mobility forced one to learn English as it is a global language. With the speed of the world learners want to learn English faster. Language laboratories offer these learners what they want. It offers fast and effective way of learning English. After using language lab for several years here I have pointed out that how lab can overcome human limitation.

**Key words:** Language Lab, Learner, Computer, Human limitations

## How Language Laboratory Overcomes Human Limitations in Teaching English

Introduction of technology in education started with projectors and tape recorder. With the advancement of ICT slowly computers came in to class. Initially it was used with a projector commonly to teach the class commonly. But that after 1990 personalized computers become very popular and easily available. So the concept of lab became popular. It was highly influenced by audio-lingual method of English language teaching. When we talk about language lab we have three main types of language lab (1) Structural Lab (2) Communicative Lab (3) Interactive Lab. Today many institutes in India are using Communicative lab and some developed institutes have Interactive type lab. Using any of the language lab can reduce human effort to learn English language. It is beneficial to teachers as well as learners that's why it is very popular. Recently Indian government offered language lab to Sri Lanka in Akuressa, Matara. On this occasion Sri Lankan Minister of Foreign Affairs stated that "English is the medium that opens a window of opportunities for Sri Lankan youth, both in Sri Lanka and abroad." (Government of India) Let's check what a lab can do better compare to humans.

**Constant Teacher:** The first and foremost feature of lab which is eye catching is, it is an untiring teacher. If we use of language lab in any institute we can overcome human limitations. It is sure that any teacher cannot teach for many hours. This is a limit of any human to work for certain hours that is why every educational institute has to fix teaching hours and work load for

every teacher. After teaching for certain hours teachers get tired. Many a time it is observed that this tiredness affects teaching learning process as well. If we use language lab it is not problem. For a teacher refreshment is compulsory but for computer it is not necessary. Computer completes task after task and that's why known as a tireless teacher.

We can expect the same performance after hours of teaching. Lab can work with the same accuracy and efficiency. It is expected by the trainer to be on leave. Language lab has the ability to adjust this work load and students can get uninterrupted teaching. The major problem these days educational institutions are facing is the problem of job shift. Many teachers change their job due to some problems or some advantages. Students have to pay the price of their job change. Lab can work as a constant and reliable support for both institutes and learners.

**Hesitation free learning:** In general class most of the learners hesitate to ask for help to their trainer. It is observed that students don't ask a same question again to their trainers if they don't understand. The problem is they don't get chance to ask questions personally and they feel shy to ask question openly in class. There is a possibility that the teacher's answer must be insulting or classmates are making fun if one asks question. Students stop taking interest in language learning activity. This problem ends with the use of language lab. Students can solve any queries personally. Special thing is that there is no wastage of time. Students feel free to ask any question as there is no fear or hesitation. No one is to insult or make fun. In traditional class special treatment to scholar or a dull student is not possible but in language lab it is possible. Lab is feasible for both fast learner and for those who catch the point after several repetitions. It is not possible for a teacher to treat all type of students at a time. As we know that computer is an untiring teacher it can help in this matter.

In the school and colleges of India any traditional class consists of 40 to 60 students. It is very difficult to manage these many students. For any teacher it becomes difficult to satisfy all students and answer their questions at a time. Sometimes students forget their question till the teacher could complete the point one is teaching. Suman and Neelam are teachers who have faced such problems and they say that "These include problems of large classes, heterogeneous classes with individual differences, lack of textbooks and source materials etc. These problems have made the present education system as highly group oriented. Normally a class consists of 40 to 50 pupil teachers who are grouped together and taught by traditional method irrespective of their individual differences." (Chhabraand 108)

A teacher has to give one's 100% to complete the lecture in limited period of time. Sometimes it becomes impossible to justify the topic. Lab also plays an important role to get the solution of this question. Lab can manage multiple learners at a time. It also answers their questions with all its potent. If learner is improving faster lab give chance to move forward and if learner is fumbling lab will give hints to achieve correct answer. For correct answer it also gives positive reinforcement so the learner gets boost up.

**A complete teacher:** There is no limit of knowledge but this is not applicable to computer as it stores information it can help for any part of learning English. As a human we have some limitations any scholar tracer may fell short to answer any corner question of students. Some grammatical questions can't be answered by phonology master and same way it is difficult for a grammarian to answer questions of other than one's area. A trainer must refer to any knowledge source life dictionary or internet to answer some questions but lab itself is a dictionary and is

connected with internet. Before asking to teacher students can take help of online option. If a learner is doing exercise and any question regarding grammar arises lab can show the rules for it. If there is any difficulty pertaining to pronunciation of any word one can check how to pronounce the word with the help of pronunciation tool of lab.

It is a plus point of a computer that it can store a huge amount of information. This can be explored for any minute detail related to English. Systematically developed software can guide for any grammatical rule or can produce correct answer if required. It is a limitation of any teacher to pronounce each word perfectly when one speaking fast. So learners have a chance to listen proper pronunciation of any word if one is learning in language lab. The most advance lab is connected with internet directly. This helps the learner to search any further detail form internet or Google. Lerner can also get connected with the world. In short lab provides a very sound knowledge support and can helps in developing English.

**Unbiased teacher:** It is true that any teacher must not discriminate between learners. Learners frequently complain that they become victims of partiality or prejudice of their teacher. A very critical bias which is faces by many non English students is colour bias. When they learn English abroad they are treated like people from other world. Native English speakers want to prove their self superior. If we talk about some other biases they are gender bias and age bias. Teacher may have their favorites but computers don't have. Teachers treat differently to those who follow their every command. Some teachers give good marks to those students who belong to their cast. They also provide material to them or help them in other way. The evil of bias can be removed by lab teaching. Lab provides a chance to learn freely and confidently to every student. In learning or about evaluation lab provides neutral result. Lab helps to make a bias free environment and generates trust in learners.

**No time constrain:** For any institute or any teacher the most burning question is time constrain. Any teacher can't work continuously of can't work on uncertain time. This limitation does not affect to computer it can work tirelessly. It is a fact the most of the learners learn English as they want to go abroad. To get job English is must but they also have to focus on their main track learning. Hence learning English becomes a part time or extracurricular activity. Mostly students learn English after their college and if their working some ware they look for late evening class. To adjust suitable timing for both is very difficult. Priority does not allow learner to learn English. A language lab can set timings according to learner's priority.

The solution for this problem can be found by arranging a common tutorial session once or twice in a week. To spare two hours a week will be easier for any learner. Practically to set classes we can set tutorial classes to teach 'Prepositions' on Monday. Next two days Tuesday and Wednesday students will have lab practices at convenient time. In these practice simple exercises of Preposition will be assigned. These two days are to check the gained knowledge and apply it. On Thursday again the teacher can continue with Prepositions and can solve queries of learner if any. Today in this session the trainer will complete the topic. Again on Friday and Saturday teacher will give more difficult task to check the knowledge. This aspect of lab helps to save human hours. It helps the learner to learn at one's suitable time. This feature of lab may increase learners of English as it can support students and working people. It is easy to use study material at home. According to Emmanuel Sharndama "Students may be referred to a material in e-library which they can access at any time and place convenient to them other than the classroom." (Sharndama, E 39) This benefit is important to keep the learner active.

**Shortage of teachers:** As there is a demand of English speaking people, teachers also required to train students in English. Almost every country faces the problem of shortage of English teachers. Sarah Eaton says in a book relating to language learning that “Teacher burnout is a sad phenomenon that is affecting the teaching profession in a variety of ways.” (Eaton S. 9) The numbers of English learners are very large and increasing day by day. Business class learns English to get a good opportunity. Students learn English to make advance their study abroad. We can hardly find someone who learns English to teach English. There is a scarcity of English teacher with systematic knowledge. Today English teachers are not available even in urban areas. These days many countries have started inviting English teachers to teach in their countries. They even offer a good package but they don’t receive resumes of good teachers. Old generation of English teachers can’t match steps with ICT in ELT.

Language lab is in great demand as it can be installed and can be used by any fresh teacher or a beginner. Most of the language lab software has various levels so we can train from beginner to advance learner. It can be used for school children, collegians and for adult learners as well. One after getting the basic training of software operation any teacher can independently handle the class. Any maintenance or query can be solved online. Today the trend of using web-based learning system like VLE is in demand. It is a copy of the real-world which helps in learning with real world. Hear lessons can be assigned and evaluate virtually. Learners have the option to submit homework online and get feedback. Parents can also have an eye on their child’s actively. That is why it is known as ‘Learning Beyond Boundaries.’ It brings teaching out of the class. It means learning can be possible anywhere and anytime.

**Conclusion:** English speaking skill is very essential for every person of the world. Not only for a success career but for good relations even knowledge of English is required. As English is a medium of connectivity it is the most learnt second language in the world. Surprisingly the number of people speaking English as a second language is more than native speakers. Proactive use of language lab can be helping hand for every person. Like pocket dictionary it is an indispensable tool for every English teaching institute. Computer has the capacity to store all necessary details so it can overcome the capacity of human mind. Even a teacher with basic knowledge of English can handle language lab in case of urgency. All adult learners who want to improve or brush-up their English can do well on their own. Even the costing for infrastructure can be cut as most of educational institutes have computer lab and language lab software can be easily installed. In today’s fast life it becomes very difficult to spare time for anything except our core area of work. It saves time and provides flexibility as well to work at our ease. Language lab is the best way to use of technology. It is true that technology can’t replace human. It is sure that we can use it as a substitute of a human.

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