DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 266 642 FL 015 456

AUTHOR Vanderplank, Robert
TITLE Evaluating the Language Laboratory in Practice.
PUB DATE 85
NOTE 13p.; In: Practice and Problems in Language Testing 8. Papers presented at the International Language Testing Symposium of the Interuniversitare Sprachtestgruppe (IUS) (8th, Tampere, Finland, November 17-18, 1984); see FL 015 442.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Audio Equipment; *Classroom Observation Techniques; Educational Research; Efficiency; *Evaluation Criteria; Facility Utilization Research; Foreign Countries; *Language Laboratories; *Program Effectiveness; Second Language Instruction; *Student Attitudes; *Teacher Effectiveness; Teaching Methods; Time Factors (Learning)
IDENTIFIERS England

ABSTRACT

A study of the use of and attitudes about language laboratories focused on teacher perceptions of their speed, accuracy, and motivational capability and on the extent to which these characteristics are exploited in classroom use by teachers and students. Observers in four British schools of English rated details of language laboratory use in a total of 56 sessions. The laboratory sessions were rated for their relationship to the criteria job satisfaction, speed, and accuracy, characteristics assumed to be advantageous in the language laboratory. It was found that only 13 of the 56 sessions fully exploited the facilities and that those sessions had these common features: frequency of use (once a day or more often), teachers skilled in laboratory use, and well-trained and responsible students with machines fully under their control. It is suggested that the language laboratory's use and usefulness are limited only by the imagination, training, and willingness of the teacher. (MSE)

EVALUATING THE LANGUAGE LABORATORY IN PRACTICE

Robert Vanderplank (Helsinki University)

1 A model for language laboratory evaluation

1.1 Background

Some time ago I investigated the proposition that the language laboratory (henceforth, LL) was largely a wasted resource. I wanted to find out why a valuable educational tool, written about for over 25 years, often at great length, and in use all over the world, was so poorly regarded by many and rarely seemed to come up to expectations when put to the test. This work was greeted well by some language schools in Britain, but on the whole it was received with an embarrassed silence. I had hoped to raise standards of LL use by attempting to raise user-consciousness through the evaluation techniques which will be described below.

The literature on LL evaluation is rather depressing. Most studies, for example, the Pennsylvania Project (Smith, 1970), the 'communicative competence' study of Sevignon (1972), and the York Study of Green and his associates (Green, 1975) come out against the LL. A notable early exception is the study of Sarah Lorge (1964), but on the whole that study remains an exception. Indeed, the last large-scale study in Britain, the York Study mentioned above, was particularly damning: that current uses of the LL make it largely a waste of money.

On the other side, there is a great deal of literature on how to select a LL, how to manage it, how best to exploit it, its advantages, and so on. Then there is a third branch which deals with reactions of teachers: questionnaires, attitude surveys, such as those by Anderson (1977) in Sweden, and by Holec (1971) in Belgium.

When, early on in my research, I complained about the basic unfairness of LL comparative studies, since they were loaded against the LL from the outset by their very design, I was told that there was no other way. As a convinced LL man who has worked in LL-orientated environments and is conscious of the benefits it may bring, I could not accept the findings of many studies in any way other than trivial. If you reduce your expensive tool to an almost insignificant role, in order to compare its performance with some thing else, waste much of its potential and fail to train personnel and make them aware of its potential, then it seems to me that you are not holding a fair evaluation.

1.2 How the model is made up

I wanted to find a means of evaluating the LL on its own terms in practice. That is, how this sophisticated, educational tool, with its own rationale and principles of good use, and with sound pedagogical reasons to justify its purchase, was actually used by teachers and learners (leaving aside purely administrative reasons for its use). I

took as my starting point the three basic reasons for the purchase of any new tool: that it does the job FASTER, BETTER, or gives more USER SATISFACTION than any other comparable piece of equipment or means of doing the job. This would mean, in teaching terms, the tape recorder, a simple form of LL, such as an audio-active LL, or no educational aids.

How are we to translate these criteria into LL terms? Well, writers on LL use often talk about the advantages of using the LL. I looked at the literature and found some 13 given, but there are seven which all writers agree on:

1. Each learner can answer all the questions and work at the time.
2. Each learner is responsible for his own performance.
3. Each learner can listen critically to his own voice.
4. Each learner can work at his own pace.
5. The teacher can deal with each learner's problems individually.
6. The LL can provide a variety of programmes and activities.
7. Learners are not afraid to speak in the privacy of the LL.

How can we link the criteria of FASTER, BETTER, and JOB SATISFACTION with the proposed or assumed advantages given in the literature. I would suggest the following:

WORK STUDY CRITERIA	ASSUMED ADVANTAGES
1. Quickness in performing tasks (cutting time/increasing practice time per student)	own pace, answer all questions
2. Accuracy in performing tasks (cutting waste/improving class performance)	listen critically, teacher can help individually
3. Job Satisfaction (using the intelligence of the user as a contributing factor to the above two criteria/ increasing interest and motivation)	responsibility, privacy, variety

You may well suggest that in reality the links are not quite as neat and clear-cut as I have made them. I would agree entirely, and this overlapping will be accomodated in another part of the model which will be described below.

What happens in practice? Of course, the advantages do not come automatically, although LL salesmen might suggest that they do. Meeting the criteria and gaining the advantages depend on whether specific facilities built into the LL are used and also on how they are used. In other words, the advantages are only realised in practice by the use of the facilities available and by the fulfilment of specific conditions regarding the use of the facilities. Let us take, for example, assumed advantage number 3. Each learner can listen critically to his own voice. In strictly practical terms, for this assumed advantage to be obtained, not only must the LL have a record/playback facility and dual-track tape recorder, but the learner must also be able to manipulate controls, drills and exercises with ease, independent

of the teacher, and have both time and the ability to assess what has been recorded and then correct errors. Moreover, the learner must be aware that the responsibility for the performance is his alone (assumed advantage number 2.).

In more general terms, each assumed advantage can be said to be based on the presence and use of facilities (e.g. cue/rewind, monitor/intercom.) or functions (learner can recap/correct, teacher can listen to learner performance/correct learner), and also on the fulfilment of both pedagogical and technical conditions. The facilities and functions of a normal AAC LL are well-known and I shall not go through them here. As far as pedagogical and technical conditions are concerned, my model includes some thirty in all, some of which are shown below:

Pedagogical conditions of use

LL work should be purpose-designed
Teacher should be trained in exploitation of LL
Objectives of any LL session should be explicit
Amount of LL work should permit learners to work systematically through at own pace
Material should be pre-recorded if administratively possible
Learners must be trained to avoid over- and under-learning
Learners must be trained not to rely on teacher intervention
Students must be trained in use of LL controls
Material used must be adequate and appropriate for the task

Technical conditions of use

Equipment used should be adequate for the task in terms of noise, reliability, clarity
All facilities should be functioning
Material used should be technically adequate e.g. quality of recording

I think it should be clear by this point that some facilities and functions and their underlying conditions of use can be linked to almost all assumed advantages, while others are more specific. For example, those concerned with self-assessment and correction, and possibly with over- and under-learning can be linked directly with assumed advantage number 3. Each learner can listen critically to his own voice. If we take this point a stage further, we can say that some facilities/functions and conditions have greater bearing on one of the three criteria for LL use: SPEED (S), ACCURACY (A) and JOB SATISFACTION (J), than on the other two. That is, you can weight the use of a facility or an underlying condition with S, A, or J, or with any combination of them. The way this works is shown below in the Operational Model for the analysis and evaluation of LL use.

Let me summarise briefly what I have said so far. My model is built on :

1. utilization of facilities and functions, and,
2. fulfillment of conditions underlying their use.

The absence and presence of these conditions and the degree to which any facility or function is exploited act as deciding factors in whether an assumed advantage is obtained in practice in any LL session.

OPERATIONAL MODEL FOR ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION OF LL USE

CRITERION	ADVANTAGE	USE OF FACILITY/FUNCTION or CONDITION OF USE	PRACTICE ORIENTED
SPEED	1. ANSWER ALL Q'S & WORK ALL TIME	LL WORK PURPOSE-DESIGNED	S/A
		START-UP TIME SHORT	S
		LEARNERS' PARTICIPATE INCREASED	J
		LEARNERS' INTEREST IN SESSION	J
		TEACHER 'HAPPY' USE OF LL	S/A/J
		TEACHER 'LIKES USING LL	J
		TEACHER EXPERIENCED	S/A
		LL WORK COORDINATED	J
		MATERIAL ORDERED	S
JOB SATISFACTION	2. RESPONSIBLE FOR OWN PERFORMANCE	ALL LEARNERS CLEAR ABOUT OBJECTIVES	S/A/J
		ALL L. 'HAPPY' MANIPULATING SKILLS	S/A/J
		FREQUENT USE OF 'I' CALL	J
		DISCRIMINATING USE OF 'I' CALL	S/A
		PEDAGOGICAL MONITOR	A/J
		INSTRUCTIONAL MONITOR	S/J
		ANALYSIS/DIAGNOSIS OF PROM. ERRORS	S/A/J
		ANAL/DIAG. OF STRUCTURAL ERRORS	S/A/J
ACCURACY	3. LISTEN CRITICALLY TO OWN VOICE	ALL LEARNERS ABLE TO CRITICIZE	A/J
		ALL CAPABLE OF SELF-CRITICISM	A
		LEARNERS TEND TO UNDER-LEARN	A
		LEARNERS TEND TO OVER-LEARN	A

CRITERION	ADVANTAGE	USE OF FACILITY/FUNCTION or CONDITION OF USE	PRACTICE ORIENTED
SPEED	4. WORK AT OWN PACE	ALL LEARNERS 'HAPPY' MECHANICALLY	S/J
		ALL PRE-RECORDED	S/J
		LEARNERS CONTROL DURING SESSION	J
		LEARNERS ABLE TO VARY PACE	S/J
		LEARNERS 'HAPPY' WITH PRE-SET PACE	J
		VARIETY OF PACE	J
ACCURACY	5. TEACHER CAN DEAL WITH INDIVIDUAL LEARNERS	TEACHER MONITORS LEARNERS IN SESSION	A/J
		INDIVIDUAL/GENERAL MONITOR	S/J
JOB SATISFACTION	6. VARIETY OF PROGS. & ACTIVITIES	VARIETY OF MATERIALS	J
		VARIETY OF ACTIVITIES	J
		LL FUNCTIONS EXPLOITED	J
		RECORDED MATERIALS INTEGRATED	S/J
JOB SATISFACTION	7. PRIVACY OF BOOTH	ACOUSTICS/NOISE	J

In turn, the absence or presence of the different advantages then indicates whether the LL session can be said to have been held for reasons of SPEED, ACCURACY, or JOB SATISFACTION, none of these, or any combination of them.

2 The model in practice

2:1 Observation grids

The model was adapted to a set of observation grids, four in all. These are shown overleaf. The most important grids for assessing individual LL sessions were Grid 2. Teacher use of LL and Grid 3. Student use of LL .

As can be seen from grids 2 and 3, absence or presence of conditions and use of facilities and functions was not enough. I was also interested in the degree to which equipment was used and functions were carried out. Each scale, therefore, had a set of operational definitions. Some examples of the definitions used are given after the grids. '0' - zero - was always taken to mean 'inapplicable in this session'.

It may all seem rather 'ad hoc' to the informed reader. I should say at this point that I attempted to gain validity for the grids and definitions (which were, in fact, derived entirely from the literature and findings of research on LL use) by distributing questionnaires on LL use to all teachers in the first school studied. The results of these questionnaires supported very strongly the model, the content of the grids and the definitions. It could be claimed, therefore, that teachers were being assessed by the very criteria that they themselves accepted or supported.

2.2 The observations

There were seven observers in four schools of English (including the author). The schools were the School of English Studies, Folkestone, Colchester and Bedford English Study Centres, and the Davies School, Cambridge. Unfortunately, the teacher at the Davies School who was to carry out the observations proved to have neither the knowledge or the experience to carry out the task adequately. It should be clear by this stage that operating this model with any degree of accuracy and reliability does require a sound knowledge and understanding of LL's and considerable experience with them. Thus, even a disappointing observer was, for the purposes of the trial of the model, useful in some respects.

Altogether 56 LL sessions were observed. In each session the observer completed the marking of the grids as the session progressed. Some class information regarding materials, students and the teacher was, of course, known in advance, so grids 2 and 3 could receive most attention. By the end of each session, an observer had gathered a lot of quantitative data on the use of facilities and functions and on the extent to which conditions had been fulfilled. These data could then be grouped according to their bearing on each assumed advantage, using the weighting given to each in terms of S, A and J.

GRID 1 : CLASS DESCRIPTION of class ..... with ..... at .... on .

Learning: Content of course:
Objectives:
Time:
Frequency:
Learning environment:
Material:
Progressive rigour:

Students: Socio-cultural:
Intellect:
Aptitude: 1 for learning:
2. for language learning:
Motivation:
Level of L2:

Teacher: Attitude to students:
Attitude to method:
Attitude to LL:
Length of experience with LL:
Cultural awareness:
Linguistic and psycholinguistic knowledge

Class: Number of students:
Average age: max. age: min. age:
Class level:
L 1's
Use of LL before:

Teacher native speaker/non-native speaker.

Teacher's age:

GRID 2: OBSERVATION OF CLASS ..... with ..... at ..... on .....

LAB. SESSION: circle appropriate alternatives

integrated/supplementary
class mode/library mode
supportive/initial
tape only/multi-media/realia/printed matter
cognitive/manipulative

TEACHER'S USE OF LL DURING SESSION. Circle appropriate number using definition sheet.

T. 'happy' use of LL	5 4 3 2 1 0
T. likes using LL	5 4 3 2 1 0
T. experiences in LL use	5 4 3 2 1 0
Objectives of session explicit	5 4 3 2 1 0
Start-up time short	5 4 3 2 1 0
Material induced	5 4 3 2 1 0
LL work co-ordinated with class work	5 4 3 2 1 0
LL work purpose-designed	5 4 3 2 1 0
LL transfers exploited	5 4 3 2 1 0
All pre-recorded	5 4 3 2 1 0
Variety of materials	5 4 3 2 1 0
Variety of activities	5 4 3 2 1 0
Variety of pace	5 4 3 2 1 0
Choice of materials	5 4 3 2 1 0
Choice of pace	5 4 3 2 1 0
T. control of pauses	5 4 3 2 1 0
Recorded materials integrated with other materials in LL	5 4 3 2 1 0
teacher monitors students/time	5 4 3 2 1 0
Pedagogical monitoring/time	5 4 3 2 1 0
Instructional monitoring/time	5 4 3 2 1 0
Monitoring from individual to general	5 4 3 2 1 0
Teacher makes notes of student errors	5 4 3 2 1 0
Analysis and diagnosis of student pronunciation errors	5 4 3 2 1 0
Analysis and diagnosis of student structural errors	5 4 3 2 1 0
Teacher feed-in of supplementary materials	5 4 3 2 1 0

GRID 3: OBSERVATION OF CLASS ..... with ... at .. on

ENJOYMENT/USE OF LL DURING SESSION. Circle appropriate number using definition sheet

		COMMENTS
All students clear as to pedagogical function of LL	5 4 3 2 1 0	
All S. 'happy' manipulatively	5 4 3 2 1 0	
All S. 'happy' mechanically	5 4 3 2 1 0	
S. tend to 'over-learn'	5 4 3 2 1 0	
S. tend to 'under-learn'	5 4 3 2 1 0	
All S. clear as to objectives of session	5 4 3 2 1 0	
S. able to vary pace	5 4 3 2 1 0	
S. 'happy' with pre-set pace	5 4 3 2 1 0	
S. able to self-correct/evaluate	5 4 3 2 1 0	
S. capable of self-correcting/evaluating	5 4 3 2 1 0	
S. frequent use of T. call	5 4 3 2 1 0	
S. discriminating in use of T. call	5 4 3 2 1 0	
S. control 100%/time	5 4 3 2 1 0	
S. interested/time	5 4 3 2 1 0	
S. participating/time	5 4 3 2 1 0	
S. individualised learning/time	5 4 3 2 1 0	

HARDWARE USED IN LL SESSION

Response requirement adequate for task:

'L' system:	yes/no
microphone:	yes/no
headset:	yes/no

T. has full remote control: yes/no

'S' stop when T. interrupts: yes/no

Functions available: high-speed transfer/simultaneous S & T record/random access revolution counter/loop-repeater/multi-input/multi-programme/two speeds/large reels for specific pause control/'S' record indicator/writing surface/group work reference facilities/

Functions used in LL session:

LL layout: Wall facing/row with sightline/row without sightline

Noise: yes/no acoustics: good/OK/poor chat: yes/no

Availability of other equipment: easy/difficult

APPENDIX 1.22. GRID 4 . SECOND STUDY

GRID 4: OBSERVATION OF CLASS .... with .. at . on

MATERIALS AND IN LL SESSION Circle appropriate choice(s)

COMMENTS

Variety of material available at this level yes/no
Prepared for LL use/prepared for textbook/multi-purpose
Published material/in-house material/script/teaching notes

Production factors:

clarity	good/adequate/poor
intonation	good/adequate/poor
tone	good/adequate/poor
speed	good/adequate/poor
noise	good/adequate/poor
accent	good/adequate/poor
intervals	good/adequate/poor

Recorded materials: 1. exercises/drills

Compatible with other materials

Unambiguous instructions	yes/no/unclear
Str. contents controlled/graded	yes/no/unclear
Changes from segment to segment controlled/graded	yes/no/unclear
Sufficient examples of str. pattern before change of pattern	yes/no/unclear
Single correct response	yes/no/unclear
Vocabulary selected/graded	yes/no/unclear
Sounds well-selected to material accompanying	yes/no/unclear
Variety of drill type	yes/no/unclear

2. dialogues for imitation/memorization/role-playing

Authentic cultural setting	yes/no/unclear
Natural subject matter	yes/no/unclear
Useful phrases for memorisation	yes/no/unclear
Segments for repetition of 'memorable' length	yes/no/unclear
Background noise appropriate	yes/no/unclear

3. other materials used

Is material used at other levels/in other situations	yes/no/unclear
Is hardware present for full exploitation	yes/no/unclear
Is content/time ratio adequate	yes/no/unclear

Differential index: Circle appropriate number on each scale using definition sheet.

discrete	+ 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 -	integrated
inflexible	3 2 1 0 1 2 3	flexible
reactive	3 2 1 0 1 2 3	interactive
linear-systematic	3 2 1 0 1 2 3	indexed-selective
T. controlled	3 2 1 0 1 2 3	S controlled
imitative	3 2 1 0 1 2 3	creative
phonetic	3 2 1 0 1 2 3	semantic
structural	3 2 1 0 1 2 3	functional
devised/adapted	3 2 1 0 1 2 3	authentic
skill-based	3 2 1 0 1 2 3	concept-based
habit-based	3 2 1 0 1 2 3	memory-based

Skill materials used help meeting teaching objectives in terms of skills, content, grading ?

yes/no/unclear

DEFINITIONS

TEACHER 'HAPPY' USE OF LL:

5 - TEACHER MAY DISLIKE BEING LL OR MAY BE INEXPERIENCED IN ITS USE BUT DEMONSTRATES A MANIPULATIVE AND MECHANICAL SKILL WITH CONTROLS AND FUNCTIONS WHICH INDICATE AN AWARENESS NOT ONLY OF THE MECHANICAL OPERATION OF THE EQUIPMENT BUT ALSO OF ITS INHERENT METHODOLOGICAL ADVANTAGES AND LIMITATIONS.

3/4 - NEUTRAL PERFORMANCE, i.e. NO PARTICULAR SYMPATHY BUT APPARENTLY AWARE OF THE NATURE OF THE EQUIPMENT AND APPROPRIATE MANNER OF EXPLOITING IT.

1/2 - TEACHER MAY LIKE BEING THE LL AND MAY EVEN BE EXPERIENCED IN ITS USE, BUT DEMONSTRATES AN ABSENCE OF MANIPULATIVE AND MECHANICAL SYMPATHY WITH CONTROLS AND FUNCTIONS WHICH INDICATES A LACK OF AWARENESS NOT ONLY OF THE METHOD OF THE EQUIPMENT, BUT ALSO OF ITS INHERENT METHODOLOGICAL ADVANTAGES AND LIMITATIONS

ALL LEARNERS 'HAPPY' MANIPULATIVELY:

5 - LEARNERS ABLE TO PERFORM THE STANDARD VARIETY OF DRILLS AND EXERCISES, e.g. REPETITION, TRANSFORMATION, SUBSTITUTION, etc., AND TO MOVE FROM ACTIVITY TO ACTIVITY WITH MINIMUM LOSS OF CONCENTRATION.

3 - SOME LEARNERS ARE NOT SO 'HAPPY' BUT ARE ABLE TO BENEFIT FROM PRACTICE

1 - LEARNERS DEFINITELY 'UNHAPPY' WHO LEAN AS TO HOW TO PERFORM DRILLS (e.g. TEACHER INSTRUCTIONAL MONITOR-TIME)

INSTRUCTIONAL MONITORING/TIME:

5 - 100% of MONITORING TIME

4 - 75%

3 - 50%

2 - 25%

1 - 0%

DEFINITIONS

TEACHER EXPERIENCED IN LL USE:

FREQUENCY X PER WEEK	DURATION X FRACTION OF HOUR	LENGTH OF TIME MONTHS

5 - 100+ VERY EXPERIENCED

4 - 80+ MODERATELY EXPERIENCED

3 - 60+ ADEQUATE EXPERIENCE

2 - 40+ LIMITED EXPERIENCE

1 - 20+ INADEQUATE/LITTLE EXPERIENCE

LEARNERS TEND TO UNDER-LEARN

5 - OVER 50% OF LEARNERS HAVE TENDENCY TO RUSH THROUGH EXERCISE AND DRILLS WITHOUT SUFFICIENT ATTENTION TO EVALUATION OF PERFORMANCE DUE WITH INSUFFICIENT USE OF PAUSE AND REPEAT FACILITIES

3 - SOME LEARNERS, BUT UNDER 50%, UNDER-LEARN AT SOME POINTS IN THE SESSION

1 - FEW, IF ANY, LEARNERS TEND TO UNDER-LEARN AT ANY TIME

LEARNERS ABLE TO VARY PACE

5 - LEARNERS HAVE COMPLETE CONTROL OF PACE OF LEARNING AND PRACTISING THROUGHOUT SESSION

3 - LEARNERS HAVE CONTROL FOR OVER [illegible] OF SESSION e.g. AFTER TRANSFER OF PROGRAMME [illegible]

1 - LEARNERS WORK IS LOCK-STEP THROUGHOUT SESSION

As was said earlier, some conditions or use of facilities/functions have a bearing on all three criteria and so were given equal S,A and J weighting, but at the same time were felt to be more relevant to a single assumed advantage and consequently were attached to that advantage. Since assumed advantages were also given S, A or J criterion, obtaining an assumed advantage establishes whether the respective criterion is being fulfilled, and thus, a qualitative assessment in terms of Speed, Accuracy or Job Satisfaction (i.e. their pedagogical equivalents) is then possible.

The results for eleven out of the fifty-six sessions are shown below (a representative sample). Two of these sessions, 19 and 39, are also given the analysis described above. The analysis shows that the main criterion for holding session 19 appears to have been Job Satisfaction. Of course, in pedagogical terms, without the other criteria, it could well be interpreted as simply giving the learners a change of scene and activity, with no clear pedagogical objectives. In session 39, on the other hand, the Job Satisfaction criterion is linked to the Accuracy criterion, through an emphasis on both accuracy and self-responsibility.

The full results in terms of the three criteria were as follows:

Criteria	Number of sessions
Job Satisfaction/Speed/Accuracy	13
Job Satisfaction/Speed	13
Job Satisfaction/Accuracy	7
Job Satisfaction only	13
Speed/Accuracy	1
Accuracy only	0
Speed only	5
None	3
Insufficient data	1

Only thirteen out of fifty-six can be said to have exploited the facilities of the LL fully according to the criteria, and to have gained the advantages of LL use. So, just as the York Study found, the LL really is under-exploited and in these terms is a wasted resource for many. The reasons for the poor showing of so many sessions have been discussed elsewhere (Vanderplank, 1981), but limitations of space means that I can only briefly summarise what the good sessions had in common and what the limiting factors in LL use appear to be from this study.

3 Common features of fully-exploited sessions

The thirteen fully-exploited sessions had the following common features:

- frequency of use (once a day or more)
- users skilled in LL use
- students well-trained and responsible / ll machines fully under their control).

Assumed advantage	Grid conditions
Each student can answer all q's and work all the time	LL work coordinated T 'happy' use of LL T likes using LL T experience Mat. indexed Start up time short S interest/time S participation/time LL work purpose-designed
Each S. responsible for own performance	All S happy manip. All S. clear objectives Frequent T-call Discrim. T-call Pedagogical monitor Anal/diag. pron. errors Anal/diag. str. errors Instructional monitor
S. can listen critically to own voice	All S. able crit. All S. capable crit. S. tend underlearn S. tend overlearn
S. can work at own pace	All S. 'happy' mech. All pre-recorded S. control/time S. able to vary pace S. 'happy' pre-set pace Variety pace
T. can deal with individual students LL can provide variety of programmes & activities	T monitor S./time Individ-general monitor Rec. mats. integrated Variety of materials Variety of activities LL functions exploited
can work in privacy of booth	Acoustics/noise

S/A/J	SESSIONS 1	2	3	16	17	18	19	20	37	38	39
	3	5	3	2	4	3	3	2	3	3	5
S /A/J	3	3	5	3	5	3	3	5	4	3	3
/J	4	2	2	3	5	4	4	5	4	5	5
S/A	5	5	5	3	5	2	5	5	5	5	5
S/	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	2	5	5	0
S/	4	5	5	4	5	3	5	4	5	5	5
/J	5	4	5	3	5	5	5	5	5	4	5
/J	5	4	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	4	5
S/A	5	5	3	3	4	2	3	4	4	3	5
S/A/J	4	2	3	3	4	4	3	5	4	3	5
S/A/J	4	5	4	3	4	5	4	4	4	4	5
J	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	3	2	1	1
S/A/J	1	2	2	1	0	1	3	5	5	0	0
A/J	2	2	4	1	2	3	2	1	2	4	5
S/A/J	4	3	3	2	3	3	3	0	1	3	5
S/A/J	2	3	3	2	1	2	1	0	1	3	5
S/ /J	4	4	2	5	2	3	4	3	4	2	1
A/J	2	5	4	4	4	3	4	4	3	3	5
A/	2	2	2	2	4	3	3	0	2	2	4
A/	3	3	3	4	3	4	4	1	3	3	1
S/	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
									4	5	5
S/ /J	5	4	4	2	4	3	4	5	1	1	5
S/ /J	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	1	3	3	5
J	3	3	4	4	3	3	4	4	3	3	5
S/ /J	1	1	0	3	4	3	4	3	1	2	0
/J	4	3	3	3	3	4	0	4	2	1	1
/J	1	2	1	1	3	1	1	2	4	5	5
				4	4	4	4	2	1	1	
A/J	3	5	4	1	1	1	1	1	3	3	3
S/ /J	2	1	1	2	4	2	3	3	3	3	1
S/ /J	1	2	3	1	3	1	2	2	2	2	1
/J	2	1	2	1	3	1	2	2	3	3	3
/J	2	1	2	3	4	3	3	3	✓	✓	✓
/J	4	3	3	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
/J	✓	✓	✓								

SESSION 19

ADVANTAGE 1 — J and S weightings predominate. Advantage obtained.

ADVANTAGE 2. — Mixed weightings. The advantage is not fully obtained as the teacher must spend so much time telling some learners what to do.

ADVANTAGE 3. — Many of the class are unable to take advantage of the compare facility.

ADVANTAGE 4 — The advantage gained by pre-recording is largely cancelled by a monotonous pace of work throughout the session, with only a short song to break it at the end. High motivation shown by high 'interest' score.

ADVANTAGE 5. — C.f. Advantage 2. Most communication with students is instructional.

ADVANTAGE 6. — Very limited. Advantage not exploited.

ADVANTAGE 7. — Obtained.

CONCLUSIONS: While Advantages 1, 6, and 7 are exploited, those concerned with self-criticism (3), self-responsibility (4) and variety (4' are not. There is a clear predominance of Job Satisfaction weightings, which, without other weightings and consequent advantages could be interpreted as simply giving the learners a change of scene and activity with no clear pedagogical objectives.

SESSION 39

ADVANTAGE 1 — Fully exploited. All weightings

ADVANTAGE 2. — Fully exploited. All weightings

ADVANTAGE 3 — Adequately exploited 'A' weightings predominate

ADVANTAGE 4 — Fully exploited. Forty minute session. High interest and participation values, although single pace throughout on tape

ADVANTAGE 5. — Fully exploited. C.f. ADVANTAGE 2. Pedagogical communication encouraging self-criticism and self-responsibility

ADVANTAGE 6 — Not exploited

ADVANTAGE 7. — Adequate. Cassette mine.

CONCLUSIONS: All Advantages except Number 6 (Variety) exploited. While all weightings are present, emphasis is on accuracy and self-responsibility (i.e. Job Satisfaction) in this session.

4 Final comments

I have argued that instead of just comparing the LL with other ways of teaching or learning languages, we need to evaluate how the LL itself is used. I have argued that we can see the rationale behind the LL in terms of three criteria, that it is faster, better, or gives more job satisfaction, and of seven advantages to be gained, potentially, in using the LL.

I would suggest that if the LL is not exploited in such a way as to fulfil the first two criteria, then the user must demonstrate how the LL is suited to the use being made of it in both technological terms and pedagogical terms. The models and grids which I have presented and described do have the potential to raise user-consciousness (especially as teacher and student checklists) through demonstrating clearly where improvements can be made. As I found in my studies, it is possible to use the LL fully and well in a very wide variety of ways - not just structural drills, listening exercises, or pronunciation work. In fact, I would say that its uses and usefulness are limited by only two factors: the skills and imagination of the teacher, and the degree of training, preparation and responsibility which the teacher can and is willing to give the learners.

Bibliography

Anderson, A. 1977. "How the language laboratory is used in schools". System 5, 1: 19-26.

Green, P.S.(ed). 1975. The Language Laboratory in School: Performance and Prediction. The York Study. Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd.

Holec, H. 1971. "Laboratoire et efficacité". Mélanges Pedagogiques 1-17.

Lorge, S.W. 1964. "Language laboratory research studies in New York City High Schools: a discussion of the program and the findings". Modern Language Journal 48, 7: 409-419.

Savignon, S. 1972. Communicative Competence. Philadelphia: Center for Curriculum Development, Inc.

Smith, P.D. 1970. A comparison of the cognitive and audio-lingual approaches to foreign language instruction. Philadelphia: Center for Curriculum Development.

Vanderplank, R.N. 1981. "Using the language laboratory to develop the listening ability of adult learners of English by means of training in the perception of stress". Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Edinburgh.