

Laboratory or Practitiatory?

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1. Introduction

To translate a word (or a passage) specific to a given field requires to truly understand what that field is all about. This is precisely what enticed us to really want to translate, and thus coin a new terminology in the realm of language learning, and more precisely in listening comprehension.

It has been argued that the term 'appropriate' to the place where the learners are exposed and receive the language they are learning is 'laboratory'. In fact, in reviewing the literature on the subject, it has appeared that everybody -or at least those we read contented that the so-called 'laboratory' is but a *place of practice*.

My Intention in the present article is to try to shed some light on how precisely this place is for practice. This will allow me, and without any zealously, to endeavor a translation of the term 'laboratory' into 'practitiatory'. The latter, in our view, reveals more overtly the idea of *practice*, as will follow.

2. The language 'laboratory' defined :

in almost all language teaching institutions, mainly in universities, the technique most ubiquitous is the language "laboratory". The 'lab' is a specially equipped room with recording-listening and teaching- monitoring devices.

It is a place where learners have individually the opportunity to listen clearly and distinctly -through their headphones- to non-authentic and authentic speech. The possibilities this pedagogic space offers to language learners remain largely incommensurate to how it is really exploited.

Yet, it is worth noting that the "lab" does not offer to the

learner real-life situations of speech exchange, but It is considered by many, as we will see, as a unique opportunity for students to pick up the language they are learning when they cannot do so in vivo in the target language community. (cf. Labed. 97). The "lab" has become, therefore, an essential place for practicing the foreign language.

3. The 'laboratory', a place for practice *per se* :

In what follows, we will show how the so-called laboratory is a place of practice, not of experiments and in which learners aren't 'guinea-pigs'.

3.1 The 'lab' provides practice:

When we consider with care the function of such a pedagogic space, we can say without fear or hesitation that it is for *practice*, and not really for making experiments (cf. Dakin 1973), however innocent the experiment might be.

Wilga Rivers (1968), sees that the lab = practice. She has clearly displayed the idea that in such a place students practice. She posits:

'The laboratory is important for providing regular and individual *practice* in the *manipulation of language forms*.'
(p. 341. Emphasis mine)

Rivers sees that the "lab" is a good place where the student can have the occasion to practice the language by listening to different subjects as stories, news, conversations, weather bulletins, football commentaries, you name it!. The learner, thus, practices the language he is exposed to.

3.2 The 'lab', exposition to language :

Students, while practicing and listening to different subjects

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are exposed to a variety of Englishes (Krashen, 1987). In other words, in implementing a syllabus, learners should not simply understand language but should precisely learn how they come to understand it. A cognitive process starts then to take place. So, with no parsimonious practice, and with a regular exposure to a variety of subjects, 'the NNS would progressively resemble their NS counterparts in performance' (Fourali, 1987:80), a "practice makes perfect" attitude of some sort.

3.3. The 'lab', a place of reinforcement:

Rost (1990), on his part, also sees that the 'lab' is a good place of reinforcement and practice. Students are on their own, they perform (individually) through drills, for example. They evaluate themselves and reinforce their learning. Students do so when, in a niggling enterprise, seek to employ strategies :

'for seeking and providing
clarification and for *checking*
and *confirming* their understanding.'
(Rost, 1990 : 227. Our italics).

Students, so, can clarify and confirm their understanding only when they intensively practice. In other words, they play the tape as many times as they feel it necessary until comprehensible input is secured .

3.4. Students are for 'practitiatory' :

To make sure that the new terminology is known, and well understood by our learners, we did not fail to ask them their opinion about the term 'practitiatory'. We wanted to know if they precisely like the new term. The results were as follows : about 80% of the total respondents (N= 103) said 'yes' for the new appellation, against 18% who said 'no'.

Moreover, according to the results obtained, we put the same question otherwise. We asked the same students whether they still prefer the 'old' term 'laboratory' instead of the new proposed one. About 70% of the respondents said 'no' against 30% who said

'yes'. (Labeled.1997:26). Our students, in their majority prefer, we take, not to cling to the old terminology.

Students have truly discovered that they practice in the 'lab'; that the 'practitiatory' is definitely not a place of 'torture', but a place of understanding and real *practice*.

4. Practitiatory – look no further !

Many applied linguists in the different literature we have reviewed used

the term 'practitioner' (certainly meaning 'he who gives/makes learners practice) which dictionaries as the OALDCE (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English, 1974 & 1983); Al-Mawrid (1979); OALD (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 1998); or the CIDE (Cambridge International Dictionary of English, 1999) explain as 'some one who does a skilled job or activity', but none of these dictionaries explains the word as "teacher". In our sense, a practitioner is a teacher whose job it is to preach the *gospel of practice* in his classes !

Indeed, the idea of practice helped foster an interest in coining – through derivational process – the term 'practitiatory'. It has also appeared to us that the meaning of *practice* encompasses the entire activities of the language 'lab', which the 'cold' term 'laboratory' does not give. In effect, arguing about advancing one particular meaning, Belloc purports that :

'if you are fairly *certain* from your *experience* that a particular meaning is intended do not fear to give that meaning although *dictionary has it not*.'

(In Redouane, 1980:09 (our italics))

Indeed, the nature of words depends vastly on our

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understanding of these words. Language on a larger scale 'cannot possibly exist without our understanding it(...)it is our understanding of it.' (Bulley.1998:48. Emphasis added).

Doubt now withers away. So, receiving comprehensible input, internalizing language, resembling native speakers, and developing and employing strategies in acquiring the target language all embody the very idea of the term 'practitiatory' which is denotative of *practice*.

5. Conclusion:

That was the point I wished to discuss. I endeavored to demonstrate that the so- called language "laboratory " is in fact a place for practice, and that "practitiatory " is a much better word. I will continue to think that the remarks I advanced above will ultimately put into question the usefulness of the term "laboratory " .

The pressure for the demand of new terminology will always inflame translators. As a freshman translator, I will likewise aspire to see my new terminology incorporate into the codification of standard English.

If I would succeed in this, I would show one more time that language is not a template, but that on the contrary it offers grand and serious opportunities to translators for coinage. I would finally claim to have enforced the argument for a strategy of translation to coin the new term 'practitiatory'.

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