What is a Language Lab?

Todays language labs are available in a number of different types of technology. Multimedia language labs use computers and incorporate language lab software.  Digital language labs that typically use digital hardware for the students and software at the teacher station only.  Language labs can also be Mobile language labs or wireless language labs. The most common language labs terminologies are; Language laboratory, multimedia language lab, language lab, language lab & media center, multimedia language learning center, software language, digital language lab, portable language lab.  Please view the video and review the text below to learn more about language laboratories.

Research shows that in a classroom average language class, all students combined speak only a limited time of the class time.

With a language lab, **all students in the class can work on different levels in 6 different groups or self-access, and speak simultaneously without distracting each other** regardless of the class size. This work can be played back to the students to practice and improve and the teachers can save this work and assign this as homework for the students. Without a language lab, this is not possible and in a class of more than 10 students, each student gets less than one minute of speaking practice without being able to record or save the students work.

The most common components in a modern language laboratory:

* Teachers and students use computers with language lab software for conducting language learning exercises and activities
* Teachers and students use headsets with microphone to communicate and conduct language learning exercises and activities
* Students have a media player/recorder to listen to audio and watch video and for recording their speech exercises
* Preset language learning lesson activities allows the teacher and students to get on task fast and easy to use without any mistakes or lengthy teacher workarounds
* The teacher and student computers are connected via the network, and in cases of digital language labs separate cat 5 cabling is used
* In the case of a digital language lab a server computer or a separate storage device is often used to store lesson materials and student recordings in a digital format

Todays language labs using current technology offer the following:

Preset language learning lesson activities allowing teachers to use any text, all images, audio and video that can all be easily be integrated. Teachers should have the option to use any content publisher or materials and edit any content to fit their particular requirements

Students should be able to control and record their own voice and play back the recordings, interact with each other individually or by groups, or pairs. Students should be able to work at their own pace, and students at different levels should be able to select their own activities from the server.

The teacher can send out present language learning or teacher lead activities, and collect and store all recording activities and assessments or test results, including preset AP Exams.

The teachers should be able to control and collaborate with students computers with the teacher’s language lab software, track the students and monitor the students’ progress.

All language lab students should have self-access for independent learning which includes access to language learning resources or teacher assignments outside class using the cloud or the same media player used in the classroom.

Using a language lab is to get students more involved to actively participate in language learning exercises, to have more time to practice the spoken language that is not possible in a traditional classroom environment.  **Language labs use the teachers and students classroom time more effectively resulting in much better overall results.**