

WHAT IS A LANGUAGE LAB?

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<https://sanako.com/what-is-a-language-lab>

Modern language labs are known by many names, digital language lab, foreign language lab, English language lab, multimedia language lab, language media center, and multimedia learning center to name but a few. These various names usually refer to the same concept.

A language laboratory is a system that transforms a passive language class into an active speaking-based learning environment. This helps the language teacher to save a substantial amount of time and manage their language classes more efficiently. For students this means that they can spend more time on speaking-based language learning activities and actually using the target language.

The language lab concept has been the most prominent application to use technology to enhance English and foreign language teaching methods in our formal education sector. Technology-enhanced teaching environment tends to be more effective than a traditional textbook or lecture-based class – especially when teaching languages.

Watch Sanako's classic "*What is a language lab*" video explaining more about language labs and how schools and universities can benefit from this language teaching and learning technology.

<https://i.ytimg.com/vi/rN8kRNblev8/maxresdefault.jpg>

How modern language labs are used in language teaching?

- In a language lab, teachers can use engaging language learning content and resources. For example, text, images, audio, and video can easily be integrated into teaching and learning languages and language teachers can alter learning materials to fit their requirements and curriculum.
- It allows important self-evaluation for students. Students can record their own voice and play back the recordings, interact with each other and the teacher, and store their results and recordings.
- The teacher has better tools to manage the classroom and observe each individual student. Language teachers can intervene and control the learners' computers, join in group discussions, listen to each individual student, track learners' work, etc.

- Expands the capabilities of the whole language learning program by allowing self-access for independent learning which includes access to language learning resources outside class.

The purpose of a language lab is **to involve students to actively participate** in language learning exercises and **get more practice time** than otherwise would be possible in a traditional classroom environment. The main benefit of a language lab is that it increases the time each student can spend actively speaking and practicing during the class. It has been noted that developing students' oral proficiency and speaking fluency is a common problem in our formal language education. This is the reason why most traditional language learning programs fail to make our students fluent. Language labs and similar language teaching and learning technology tools solve this problem efficiently.

What are the components and equipment in a language lab?

- Teacher has a computer or a laptop with appropriate software for conducting language classes and assigning language learning activities for students.
- If the teaching takes place in a physical classroom or in the school's computer lab, then the teacher and students usually wear language learning headsets that block outside sounds and disturbances.
- Students' side of the language lab software provides the students a media player for listening to audio materials and recording tools for recording their speech and pronunciation.
- Teacher and student positions are connected via LAN (local area network) if they are using a [desktop language lab software, like Sanako Study 1200](#), and via Internet if they are using modern browser based [tool like Sanako Connect](#).

You can find some commonly asked questions (and answers!) about language labs from our other post here: "[Commonly asked questions about language labs](#)".

What are the benefits of language labs in language teaching?

In a normal foreign language class without any language lab or language teaching software, all students combined speak only about 23,5% of the class time.

In a 45-minute-long class this 23,5% equals approximately 10 ½ minutes. As this number is the speaking time of all students put together, the time each student gets to practice speaking becomes less as class size is increased!

How much speaking practice does each student get during a 45-minute language class, depending on class size?

Traditional classroom without language lab (10 students): ~1 minute

Traditional classroom without language lab (30 students): ~21 seconds

Classroom with language lab (10 students): ~11 minutes*

Classroom with language lab (30 students): ~11 minutes*

With a language lab, **all students in the class can speak simultaneously without distracting each other** regardless of the class size. Without a language lab, in a class of more than 10 students, each student gets less than one minute of speaking practice.

Speaking for less than 1 minute per class cannot possibly develop a student's language skills like spontaneous speaking, real-life communication, and pronunciation as efficiently as we would like. Language labs are solving this problem in language education.

****Note: actual speaking time per student can be considerably higher depending on what type of exercises the teacher conducts. In many cases it can be even 40 minutes per 60 minute class.***

You can read more about [how effective language labs are in language teaching](#) from our other blog post.

Cloud-based and virtual language lab solutions

The most advanced language lab solutions today are fully software-based and can be used anywhere and anytime via a normal web-browser. The advantage of these cloud-based solutions is that they don't need to be installed on the school's computers. They are very easy to set up and maintain, saving school's budget in the process.

With cloud based, online language lab software, teachers can teach, and students can learn any language, on any device. They can be used on virtually any operating system, on a tablet, a PC, a Mac or a Chromebook. Therefore, an online language lab is the perfect solution for a language school or language department who has "Bring Your Own Device" or BYOD policy.

Sanako language labs and Sanako language teaching solutions for schools and universities

With customers in 114 countries and over 50,000+ classrooms globally supported by our solutions, Sanako is the global leader in language labs and language teaching software. We started in 1961 under our previous company name "Tandberg Educational". We are the most established and reliable language lab and language teaching software provider. During our time in business, our language labs and software solutions have become the industry-standard tools for professional language teachers in high schools and universities.

Our mission is to make language teachers' life and teaching easier and to increase their students' language skills with a sharp focus on developing their communication and speaking skills.

Working with an international network of over 100 dedicated partners and resellers, Sanako provides customers with a full range of language teaching and learning solutions. This includes everything from traditional classroom language labs to cloud-based language teaching platforms.