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THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN
NAVOI STATE PEDAGOGICAL INSTITUTE
THE FACULTY OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES
THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LEXICON

COURSE WORK

On the theme: «Management of self-access facilities at secondary school»

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Navoi-2015

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INTRODUCTION

The main objective of all our reforms in the field of economic policy is the individual. Therefore the task of education, the task of rising up a new generation capable of national renaissance will remain the prerogative of the state and constitute a priority¹.

I.A. Karimov

The great German poet Goethe once said: He who knows no foreign language does not know his own one. Learning foreign languages is especially important nowadays. Some people learn foreign languages because they need them in their work, others travel abroad, for the third studying languages is a hobby. A modern engineer or even a worker cannot work with an imported instrument or a machine if he is not able to read the instruction how to do it. Ordinary people need language to translation the instruction or the manual to the washing-machine or a vacuum-cleaner, medicine or even food-products.

Nowadays if you want to be a classified specialist you must learn English, the language of international communication. English is one of the world languages. It is the language of progressive science and technology, trade and cultural relations, commerce and business. It is the universal language of international aviation, shipping and sports. It is also the major language of diplomacy. Hundreds and hundreds of books, magazines and newspapers are printed in English, most of the world's mail and telephone calls are in English. Half of the world's scientific literature is written in English. English is spoken by more than 350 million people. Geographically, it is the most widespread language on earth, second after Chinese. It is the official language of the UK, the USA, of Australia and New Zealand; it is used as one of the official languages in Canada, the South Africa. Millions of people study and use English as a foreign language.

¹Karimov I.A. Harmoniously developed generation is the basis of progress of Uzbekistan. T: 1991 p 4.

Learning English is not an easy thing. It is a long process and takes a lot of time and patience. But to know English today is absolutely necessary for every educated person.

In our country also one of the most important issues of the present day has become learning foreign languages since on December 10, 2012 President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov signed a decree “On measures to further improve foreign language learning system”. It is noted that in the framework of the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On education" and the “National Programme for Training” in the country, a comprehensive foreign languages’ learning system, aimed at creating harmoniously developed, highly educated, modern-thinking young generation, further integration of the country to the world community, has been created.

In present day one of the best ways of learning foreign language is Self-access learning.

Self-access learning plays an important role in language education in many parts of the world. It is an individualization of learning in which each learner interacts in a unique way with controlled or uncontrolled learning environments ranging from self-access centers, through self-access language learning integrated into taught courses, to opportunities for authentic language use beyond institutional control. A major goal of the promotion of self-access learning is the fostering of autonomous learning, although this is not an inevitable outcome. When successful, SALL also contributes to the development of students as independent thinkers and lifelong learners.

Self-access centres (SACs) are the most common facilities used in the promotion of self-access learning. However, integration of some forms of SALL into taught courses is becoming increasingly popular and the development of virtual resources is blurring the boundaries of self-access environments. The development of SACs led to the emergence of a new role for teachers as SAC managers. This role is increasingly extending beyond the physical confines of the SAC into the management of self-access language learning (SALL) in a broader

sense. This role clearly has a potentially wide impact both on the students whose learning is affected by the way SALL is managed and also on the teachers who may be required to implement the integration of SALL into courses they teach.

The aim of our course paper is to find out strategies of management of self-access facilities at secondary schools.

The tasks of the course paper are to give characteristics of self-access facilities, to use innovative methods of making self-access centre at school, to show advantages and disadvantages of self-access language learning.

Practical value of the course paper is to collect material about setting up self-access centre at secondary schools.

The structure of the course paper: the work consists of introduction, four paragraphs, conclusion and bibliography.

1. The Background to self-access language learning

Self access language learning promotes the approach where students study independently choosing from among different resources that are available. The theory behind this style of learning is that students, especially foreign language students, learn better if they have say in how they learn. Self-access language learning is closely related to learner-centered approach, learner autonomy and self-directed learning as all focus on student responsibility and active participation for his/her own learning. This style of instruction is most often done in the setting of a self-contained learning environment or self-access center.

Self-access centers can be as simple as a classroom set aside with dictionaries and shelves of paper-based exercises to state-of-the-art digital centers with various types of computer- and Internet-based resources. What resources are available and how students are guided to use them depend on the financial resources available and how much learner autonomy an institution decides to give students.

Self-access and learner autonomy. “Self-access” is a way of describing learning materials that are designed and organized in such a way that students can select and work on tasks on their own although this does not preclude the possibility of various kinds of support, and obtain feedback on their performance, for example by comparing their answers to a key which accompanies the material².

“Self-access” cannot be equated with “learner autonomy”. As Sheerin points out, self-access refers to materials that are made available for learners to work on their own. However, this does not imply that learners who use self-access materials are autonomous. Likewise, learners who choose to have lessons with a teacher are no less autonomous than others who learn a language using self-access materials. As several scholars have pointed out, being autonomous is not synonymous with learning a language in a particular way (i.e. either with a teacher, or in a self-access mode, or interacting with native speakers), but it means taking active responsibility

² Sheerin, S. (1989). *Self-Access*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

for one's own learning³. This implies, for example, defining one's learning objectives, identifying one's progress in language learning, selecting and implementing learning strategies, identifying learning styles that do not seem to work and trying others, monitoring one's learning, etc. It is not the aim of this paper to do well on the debate about the definition and implications of learner autonomy; for a study of the theoretical grounding of the concepts connected to learner autonomy. What is important here is to bear in mind that self-access resources do not automatically make learners autonomous, because it is possible that such resources are used in an autocratic mode, without allowing learners to take an active part in the decision-making process. Ultimately, "[it] is the way teachers and learners use self-access facilities which determines whether independent learning takes place"⁴.

Nevertheless, there clearly exists a close relationship between self-access and learner autonomy: autonomy aims at giving learners the possibility of making choices and taking charge of their learning, whereas self-access provides learners with manifold ways of learning. Thus, self-access can be seen as one context in which autonomy can be developed. Autonomy can also be enhanced inside the classroom, communicating with native speakers, or working with other learners to take the most common examples. If self-access refers mainly to materials that are put at the disposal of learners to work on their own, a 'self-access approach' has a much broader sense, implying the whole learning institution working towards promoting learner autonomy through the use of self-access learning materials. In other words, a self-access approach is a means to develop learner autonomy. Accordingly, the term 'self-access system' refers to the implementation of a self-access approach in a language learning centre in school.

³ Dickinson, L. (1987). *Self-instruction in language learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁴ Sheerin, S. (1989). *Self-Access*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

2. Teachers and pupils roles in self-access language learning

Learner independence and responsibility. All learners have different needs and are on different points along their particular learning trajectories, and class-based courses following linear syllabuses have serious problems in meeting individual learners' needs. It is now widely recognized that self-access facilities, on the other hand, can cater for the individual, and encourage learners to define their own needs and then pursue them, offering ways to branch out from, or in some instances escape from, the binding syllabus. But it is not enough simply to provide space, hardware, and materials in order to produce a successful self-access room. While much has been written recently on what to put in a self-access room, the question of how the room is subsequently used needs, in our opinion, more attention.

Society teaches us that we need to be taught, i.e. that learning is dependent upon being taught. It does this by the traditional roles that are assigned to teachers and students, whereby the teacher is in tight control, transmitting content and knowledge, selecting and directing activities. Learning and the correction of errors are the teacher's responsibility. The student, on the other hand, is passive, led by the teacher, marching in lock-step with others. Learning is not his or her responsibility. Thus, these traditional roles foster an insidious lack of independence and responsibility in the student. This is liable to hinder learning because of lack of involvement and self-investment in the learning process on the part of the student. The most successful language learning strategies are connected with assuming responsibility for one's own learning⁵.

Teachers cannot learn for students, and in order to increase learner independence and responsibility for learning, the traditional roles need to change as follows⁶:

⁵ Naiman J.B. (1978). *The characteristics of good language learners*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁶ O'Malley, J. M., & Chamot, A. U. (1990). *Learning strategies in second language acquisition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Teacher

paternal/ assertive dispenser of all knowledge fostering dependence	fraternal/permissive resource person/consultant training for independence
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Student

passive no responsibility for learning seeking approval submissive	active assume responsibility for learning doing without overt approval involved in decision-making
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Many educators argue that our world is changing so rapidly that some people may need to retrain several times during their working life due to the need either to keep abreast of developments in their occupation, or to change a redundant occupation for a new, non- redundant one. According to this view, life should be seen as a continuing process of education. Teaching and imparting of knowledge makes sense in an unchanging environment. This is why it has been an unquestioned function for centuries. But if there is one truth about modern man, it is that he lives in an environment which is continually changing . . . We are, in my view, faced with an entirely new situation in education where the goal of education, if we are to survive, is the facilitation of change and learning. The only man who is educated is the man who has learned how to learn; the man who has learned how to adapt and change; the man who has realized that no knowledge is secure, that only the process of seeking knowledge gives a basis for security.

If this is the case, there is a radical need to equip people with the tools for undertaking their own learning. Learners are individuals Influenced by humanistic psychology, educators have recently emphasized the fact that students are individuals with different needs, styles and interests, and that we as educators and fellow human beings should take account of these differences in the provision made for their learning.

1. Psychological differences

There are psychological differences between students. They differ in their cognitive abilities and language learning aptitude: some people learn languages more quickly and easily than others. They differ in their learning styles, i.e. in their preferred ways of processing information: some are predominantly auditory channel learners while others are visual learners; in some students the left brain is dominant (favouring logical, analytic thinking), while in others the right brain holds sway (favouring creative, lateral thinking), and there are many other possible differences.

2. Study habits

Individuals also differ in their study habits, in their likes and dislikes of particular learning tasks and activities, in their preferred skills and in their general problem-solving strategies. Individualized language learning and teaching includes the following in his list of individual differences:

- students learn through different media (textbooks, films, games, physical activities, etc.);
- students learn through different styles of content/process organization (deductive, inductive, discovery, learning by doing, memorization, etc.);
- students perform differently in different group arrangements (working alone, peer tutoring, small group activities, whole class instruction, etc.);
- students' learning efficiency varies differentially according to time of study (longer versus shorter study periods, morning versus afternoon, beginning of class period versus end of class period, first term versus last term, etc.);
- students' learning efficiency varies differentially according to place of study (in class study, library study, laboratory study, home study, etc.).

3. Personality differences

Individuals clearly differ enormously also in their personalities, beliefs, and attitudes. The list of personality and affective variables appears endless. Just three of the possible variables are:

- the degree of introversion/extroversion (extroverted people tend to be more sociable and outgoing, which some researchers believe to be desirable qualities for language learning);
- the degree of tolerance of ambiguity;
- the degree of ethnocentricity, i.e. the degree to which one is bound to the central tenets or mores of one's culture (good language learners tend to have a low degree of ethnocentricity).

4. Motivation

Perhaps the most discussed and examined difference among pupils is the varying degree of motivation to learn a language. This is bound up with attitudes towards the target language and culture, and also related to individual goals and achievement orientation. What is certain is that, especially among adults, there are many different reasons why an individual may wish to learn a foreign language. Some institutional settings may favour one kind of motivation but may be a frustrating and demotivating setting for students with a different kind of motivation.

5. Different purposes

Students have different purposes in learning English. They may be responding to the needs of their job or occupation (future or actual). They may be responding to the necessity of studying in an English-speaking environment or they may be preparing for public examinations in English. They may be learning English because they are immigrants in an English-speaking culture, or they may want to learn English in order to visit an English-speaking country as a tourist. All of these are very specific language-learning purposes. The varied demands of ESP (English for Specific Purposes) students inevitably involve at least some degree of individualization.

6. Summary

The evidence for the existence of psychological, personality, and motivational differences between students is overwhelming and it is this, perhaps, more than anything which provides one of the strongest reasons for introducing

some measure of individualized instruction in order to cater for, and indeed exploit, these differences. Instruction consisting of one diet for all aimed at a class of, say thirty, will almost certainly not constitute a completely suitable diet for any one of the individuals in that class.

In addition to psychological and motivational differences in language learning and teaching, language teachers know to their cost that students differ in the order in which they acquire “bits” of the language. Many classes are made up of individuals who have followed different syllabuses, and or have been taught different things by different methods. Even in a class where all individuals have had the same diet from the start, there will be differences in what has been acquired and what not. This manifests itself in the fact that different students, even in a monolingual group, make different sorts of errors.

Errors are no longer regarded as evidence of failure on the part of the student but as valuable evidence for the state of their inter language. Many teachers now regard themselves as diagnosticians as well as clinicians, pin-pointing the source of errors and instigating remedial action. This capacity for specific diagnosis of a student’s errors is pointless unless the remedial action is directed towards the student and his or her error, i.e. individualized! After all, doctors would not administer insulin to an entire hospital ward because one of the patients was diabetic.

Self-access learning is the practical solution to many language teaching problems: mixed-ability classes, students with different backgrounds and needs, psychological and personality differences between students, etc. The essential prerequisite to self-access learning is the provision of self-access materials within an organized framework so that students can get at what they need.

Setting up self-access possible problems. Apart from the enormity of the task of setting up self-access facilities and the practical problems this entails, there can be other less tangible problems in the attitudes and prejudices of teachers and or students. Let us take the problems of teachers first. Most teachers have been trained and gained their experience in the traditional mode. A change in role from

“parent” to “equal” necessitates a change in attitude which can be quite traumatic. Teachers can find, if they are honest with themselves, that they need their students to need them. They may complain about having to chase this student for his or her homework or about having to chivvy that student to arrive punctually, but in reality they can be hooked on this parent-type role.

Students also have their hang-ups! It is much easier to be dependent and let someone else (i.e. the teacher) take the responsibility. This is the way most educational systems work and it is, therefore, what most students are used to. Cultural differences may also present serious problems. Independence is not a virtue in all cultures. Other qualities of respect, obedience, and self-effacement may be much more highly valued. Moreover, in some religions, people are taught to regard the teacher as an almost mystical figure to be held in awe. He or she is the unquestioned dispenser of knowledge. For students from such a culture, our obsession with independence must seem incomprehensible. For some teachers and students, a minority, one hopes, it may be useless to try to change ingrained attitudes. For the majority, however, a period of training and development can go a long way towards achieving acceptance of new roles and methods. The question of learner training and development is dealt with in some

3. Self-access facilities at secondary schools

Self-access centres. Self access language learning centres are educational facilities designed for student learning that is at least partially, if not fully self-directed. Students have access to resources ranging from photocopied exercises with answer keys to computer software for language learning. These centres are an outgrowth of a style of learning that can go by several names: learner-cantered approach, learner autonomy or self-directed learning.

A self-access centre is a physical entity. It might be a classroom cupboard with a set of dog-eared learner dictionaries and a pile of supplementary exercises, or it might be an all-singing, all-dancing, multimedia learning centre with state of the art learning resources and a team of language counsellors to guide individual student development.

The physical description of a self-access centre is, however, only part of the story. Why it's there is the other part of the equation. What is the point of setting up self-access resources for our students?

Self-access centres (SACs) are the most common facilities used in the promotion of self-access learning. However, integration of some forms of SALL into taught courses is becoming increasingly popular and the development of virtual resources is blurring the boundaries of self-access environments. The development of SACs led to the emergence of a new role for teachers as SAC managers. This role is increasingly extending beyond the physical confines of the SAC into the management of self-access language learning (SALL) in a broader sense. This role clearly has a potentially wide impact both on the students whose learning is affected by the way SALL is managed and also on the teachers who may be required to implement the integration of SALL into courses they teach. Despite the potential impact of the SAC managers' work, little is known about what influences the ways they implement SALL.

If you teach in a school which wishes to introduce self-access facilities where previously none existed, then the most fundamental decision which has to be taken initially concerns the location of these facilities. Can the school give up a

room or an area which can be used as a study centre with self-access facilities? If this is impossible then other solutions have to be found.

The first section of this chapter is addressed primarily to those who wish to set up or improve a study centre with self-access facilities. Following this, other ways of offering self-access are considered for those teachers or institutions where there is no especially dedicated area or separate room. Generally applicable questions of materials design, classification, and storage are then considered and, finally, there is a look at staffing implications.

Setting up a study centre. The first question concerns the location of the study centre. Which room or rooms is to be given over to this purpose? If your school has a library, then one practical solution is to redesign it so that opportunities for private study using a variety of media are created. In an ideal world a study centre would include a library section and a self-access section.

1. A library section

This section can house books, newspapers, and magazines which cater for a variety of student needs. Apart from the obvious overall need to learn more about English, students may also need to practise study-skills and reference-skills, to gather information for projects or for personal interest, to read extensively for pleasure and for language improvement, to keep abreast of the news, etc. In order to satisfy all these needs, the library could include:

- a reference section: dictionaries, grammar books, encyclopaedias, an atlas, etc.;
- a reading section: simplified readers, light fiction, literature;
- a non-fiction section: e.g. Britain and USA, travel, biography, etc.;
- newspapers and magazines: English language newspapers (e.g. one quality, one popular), English language periodicals (e.g. Newsweek), EFL magazines;
- an EFL section: e.g. language workbooks + key, comprehension books + key, ESP and/or EAP books, if appropriate.

It is obviously necessary to be highly selective here as an EFL school library should not try to rival a municipal or college library. Rather than attempt to be fully comprehensive, decide on a small number of very useful categories which you know will be of interest to your students. Within those categories books should be selected on the principle of quality rather than quantity. Remember to include some simplified non-fiction readers for the lower levels.

2. A self-access section

This section should contain language learning materials which students can use on their own. In order for it to be self-access, students have to be able to find material easily which is at their level and satisfies their perceived needs. They also need to be able to evaluate their own work by checking what they have done against a key or a model answer, or they need to be able to gain some other form of feedback.

If learning material with the same main focus is grouped together then a self-access section could well comprise:

- **Reading** - preparation, intensive reading/short texts, extensive reading/longer texts, text types (e.g. jokes);
- **Listening** - preparation, intensive listening/short texts, extensive listening/ longer texts, text types (e.g. songs);
- **Writing** - preparation, handwriting, spelling and punctuation, controlled activities, guided writing activities, free writing topics, text types (e.g. letters);
- **Speaking** - preparation, pronunciation / sounds, pronunciation/stress, etc., communication tasks, games, problem-solving activities, text types (e.g. plays);
- **Grammar** - preparation, verbs, nouns/pronouns, adjectives, adverbs, articles etc., prepositions;

- **Vocabulary** - preparation, dictionary work, text-based work, topic-based work, idiomatic language, word building, word associations, self-testing;
- **Social English** - preparation, requests, apologies, suggestions, etc.

This is not the only possibility, but is offered as an example of a system that teachers can tailor to the needs of their particular teaching situation.

3. Equipment

Although it is impossible to set up a useful self-access centre without any technical equipment, if the school has the necessary resources then such equipment, even if it consists of nothing more than a few cassette recorders, can greatly increase the scope of what is offered to students. Here is a list of equipment which can be usefully provided in a self-access study centre (the first item is undoubtedly the most necessary):

CD/DVD recorders

For listening practice. They should be fitted with earphones (so as not to disturb other students) and, if possible, be wall-mounted so as to leave the desk area free for books and papers.

Audio-active comparative (AAC) Labs

For students to record and listen to their own voice. If this facility is provided, then thought needs to be given to installing sound-proof booths or partitioning off a section of the study centre.

Computers

Computers are an excellent aid to self-access language work, in that they operate as if they had endless patience in pointing out students' errors and giving them instantaneous feedback. They can also generate tests and exercises, a task which teachers find very tedious. Areas for which software is available include:

- Vocabulary programs: programs which focus primarily on individual lexical items tend to be presented in game form, and include spelling, anagram, and odd-word-out games. Many of these programs are authorable, that is to say

that teachers (or students) can enter their own lists of words which the computer will then use to generate a number of different vocabulary games.

- Text reconstruction programs: these programs require the student to restore a complete text or parts of a text. This frequently involves the student in making educated guesses on contextual or syntactic grounds. If the guess is correct, then that part of the text is restored.

- Test programs: testing software tends to be very popular with students, who seem to enjoy the challenge of a test when there is no possibility of a poor result causing them to lose face or earn a teacher's disapproval.

- Adventures: adventure programs present a fantasy micro-world in which the user moves from location to location, making decisions, and carrying out various tasks.

- Word processing programs', the provision of word processing facilities can help students improve the quality of their written composition. Dictionary and thesaurus facilities available with many word processing programs enable students to check their spelling and they even list alternative words a student could use. The great ease with which changes can be made to text which has been already written also encourages students to edit what they have produced to a much higher standard.

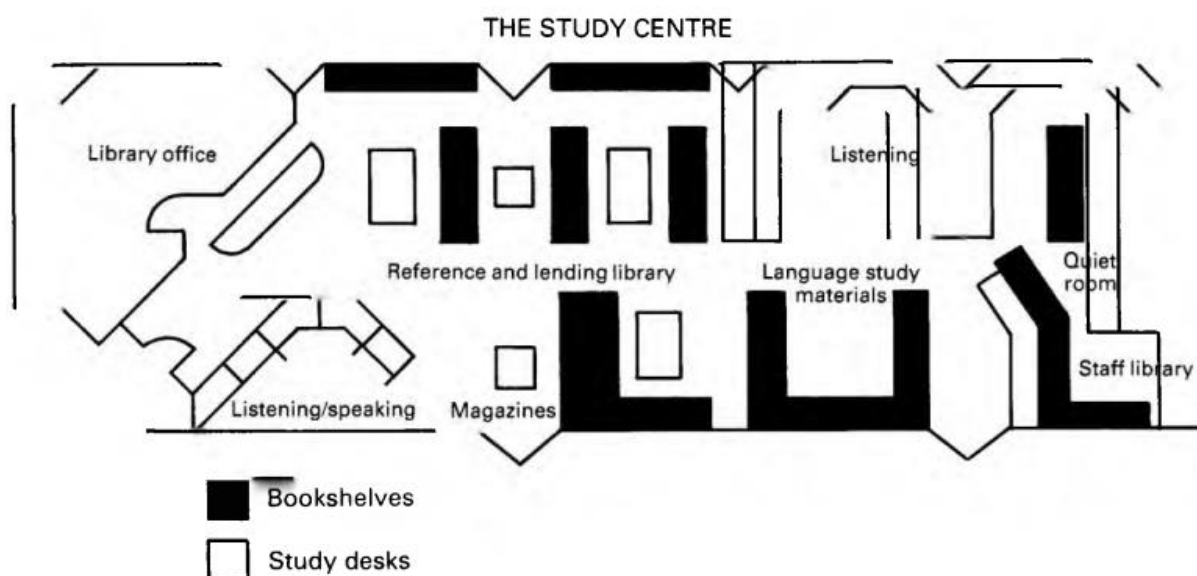
Video stations. Video is extremely valuable for self-access work. It is a motivating way of providing information, listening practice, and exposure to native speakers speaking English. If your school possesses a video camera, then students themselves can be recorded. This opens up the possibility of students video-recording short talks on topics which new students would find useful and interesting such as: "Why I have found the self-access centre useful"; "English language books I have enjoyed reading"; or, for UK based institutions, "The best places to eat near the school"; "Interesting places to visit near the school", etc. As well as a video play-back machine and a monitor for viewing, it is necessary to provide headphones in a self-access centre so that other students are not disturbed. It is a good idea, in fact, to plug two sets of headphones into each available video

station. Not only does this double the number of students who can avail themselves of the facility at any one time, but it also encourages co-operation and communication between students. If there is to be a fair amount of technical equipment, or if the school may expand in this direction, then it is worth thinking of installing electro-tracking along the wall just above table height. This enables electrical equipment to be plugged in at practically any point along the working surface. Trailing wires are thus kept to a minimum.

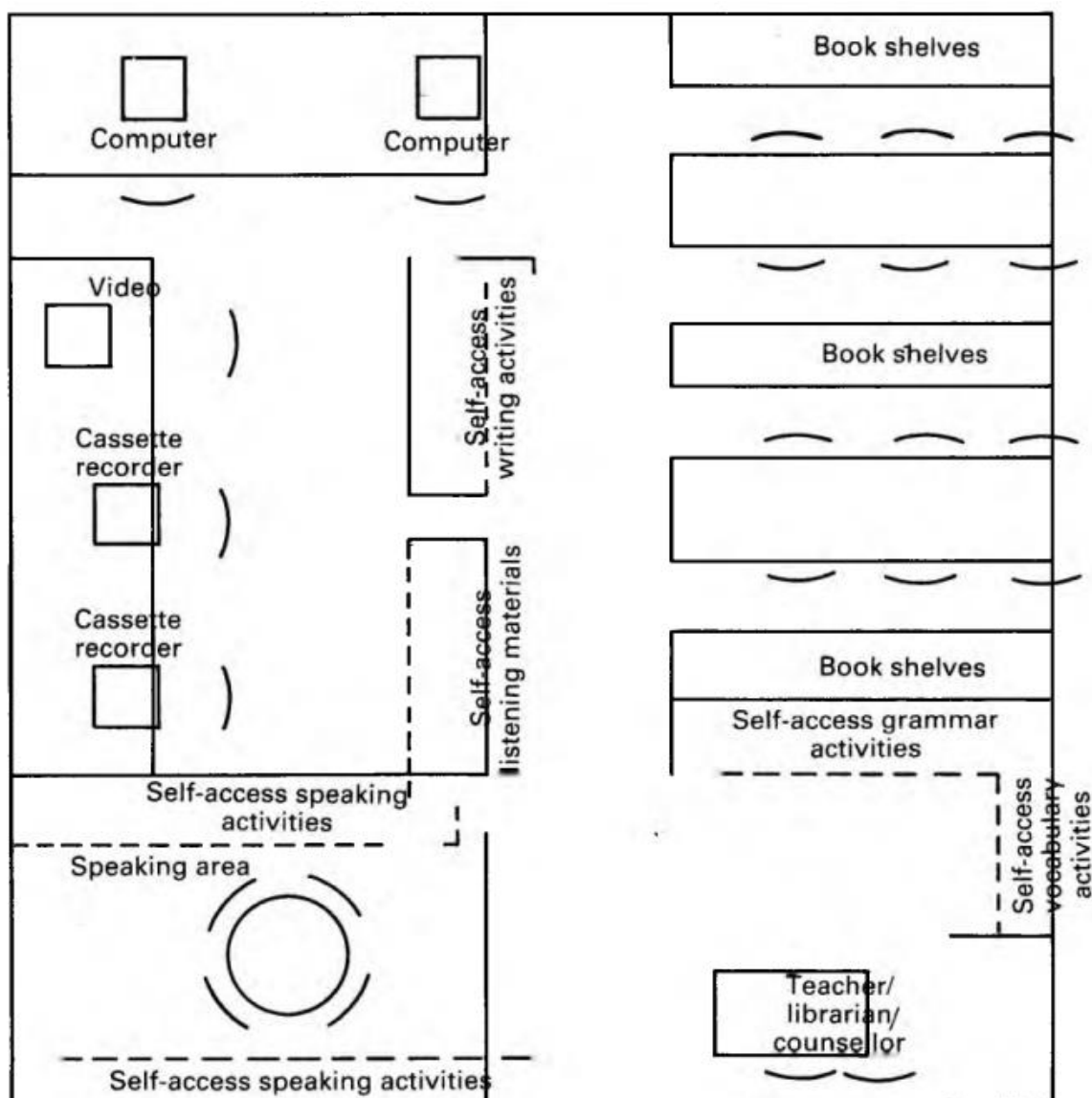
4. Layout

When considering the layout of a study centre, the size of the room or area obviously plays a crucial role. If one fairly largish room is available, then it can be divided into convenient sections relating to the various kinds of activities which will be taking place. Careful thought needs to be given to the organization of space available. Needless to say, as well as housing books, self-access materials, and equipment, you need to provide working areas for private study. Provide as much privacy as possible by breaking up large areas into smaller ones, using bookshelves as partitions and screens. There are also various ergonomic aspects to consider. The movement of people into, through, and out of the study centre needs to be easy and unhindered. This is best achieved by having a central aisle right through the study centre with side bays off. This allows easy movement rather than the tortuous progression which can be induced by maze-type layouts. Another ergonomic aspect to consider is the distribution of noise. The noisiest part of any library or study centre is inevitably the entrance area, and so activities which involve talking, such as the lending and returning of books, audio-active labs., etc. should be grouped near the entrance so that the study centre becomes progressively quieter as you progress into it, with the most studious activities located as far away from the entrance as possible.

Below is the floor plan of a large purpose-built study-centre which was designed with these points in mind:



For those with less space at their disposal, here is a suggested layout for a room twelve meters by seven meters:



Self-access work in the classroom. If resources are limited, a separate room or study centre of the kind envisaged above may not be feasible. Teachers in this situation need certainly not abandon the idea of individualizing learning and encouraging learner independence and responsibility. There is a lot that can be done in the classroom to change the traditionally dominant role of the teacher and the passive role of the student. There are ways of turning a classroom into a mini self-access centre once or twice a week or however often seems appropriate. This can be done by setting up semi-permanent activity corners: a listening corner with a couple of cassettes and headphones; a reading corner with a class library and or a reading laboratory (see the section on ‘reading laboratories’); a games table or cupboard where games with clear instructions for self-access are kept; a computer, if available; another corner with a collection of grammar books, dictionaries, and associated workbooks. Another possibility is to put together a self-access box (or collection of boxes) or a self-access trolley which could be used all over the school. The attraction of this idea is its flexibility. The relatively small scale of the operation allows sceptical schools and/or teachers to try out self-access learning in a small way. They can then build up their resources as and when necessary, drawing on their experience of the way in which the facility is being used. As far as practical considerations are concerned, if it is intended to store self-access material in boxes, then one box per level is probably the most convenient method of organization, i.e. a beginners’ box, an intermediate box, etc. A system for teachers to book the self-access material for their classes is most useful.

4. Management of self access facilities.

Materials design and production:

1. Criteria for design

What criteria should be applied to the design of good self-access material?

Here are some suggestions:

Clearly stated aims

It is extremely important that the student should understand what the aims of the self-access material he or she uses are. This enables the student to decide whether or not it suits his or her needs.

Clarity of rubric

Careful attention should be paid to rubrics when writing or adapting material. If students are going to work on their own there is a need for the utmost clarity, together with clear examples of what is required. It is also necessary to control the level of language used in instructions. If the material is elementary, the rubric should be comprehensible to someone at that level. Another possibility in a monolingual situation is to write instructions in the students' mother tongue, thus avoiding all misunderstanding.

Attractive presentation

Great care needs to be taken to ensure that self-access materials are as attractive and inviting as possible. Material with a professional finish will give the student confidence.

Worthwhile activity

This seems an obvious point but it is, nevertheless, worth stating that the activity the student is required to do should be worthwhile. That is to say, it should be possible to learn something by doing the activity, and that 'something' should be worth learning (see the 'Design for learning' section below). The material should also be motivating and interesting. People working on their own especially need such a stimulus.

Choice of procedure

Bearing in mind that the purpose of providing self-access facilities is to increase learner independence, materials writers should try not to be unnecessarily dictatorial in the instructions that they write. Offering students a choice of procedure gives them the opportunity to employ learning styles which suit them best.

Feedback

Self-access materials are used without a teacher, and therefore, feedback needs to be built in. Practice activities need keys; listening material needs a typescript; more subjective activities require commentaries rather than keys. For free production activities feedback can take the form of successful task performance, “publication” or model answers.

Balanced diet

When looked at as a whole, the provision of materials should be balanced and coherent, that is to say the quantity of material at each level and for each main focus should be more or less the same. There should also be a variety of activity types and aims.

2. Design for learning

A generally accepted definition of self-access material tends to be that it consists of activities or text, plus questions or tasks which are self-correcting; that is to say there is only one right answer, so that objective marking is possible. This means that students themselves can correct their own work and they must, therefore, have access to the answer(s) or key. Self-correcting self-access material basically consists of different types of tests. The feedback which such an activity provides, especially as it is discovered by the students themselves, can lead to learning, but a self-access centre which consists only of such material is providing rather barren fare. The philosophy underlying the introduction of self-access learning is concerned with more than simply shifting the source of all wisdom from a teacher to an answer book or key (provided anyway by teachers). The possibilities are greater than this. Self-access material can inform and generally

raise awareness (e.g. discovery tasks, information guides, study guides), lead the student to be reflective and/or creative (e.g. reviewing, story writing), or can encourage the student to join up with his or her peers in order to engage in communication tasks, games, etc.

Even with the traditional practice or testing type of activity there are various ways to place more emphasis on learning:

- students can be guided towards the appropriate section(s) of works of reference such as grammar books and dictionaries if they have answered many questions wrongly
- short explanations can be given as to why the correct answer is correct, or incorrect answers are wrong (this tactic is particularly appropriate for use with comprehension work).

3. Using published material

When setting up a system there is obviously a need for the rapid production of a lot of material to form the basis of the self-access centre. For the sake of speed it is best to think in terms of using published material to begin with. Books and workbooks can be cut up (not photocopied, as this would contravene copyright) to form small, self-contained units of work with an identifiable focus. Make sure you adapt the published material to suit your in-house style and standard layout.

For practice or test-type activities any published material which uses exercises or comprehension questions which can be marked objectively, i.e. short factual questions, yes/no questions, true/ false questions, multiple choice questions and the like, is potentially suitable for self-access, especially if there is a key to the questions. (If there is no key then someone will have to work out the answers and provide one.) Published material can usefully be combined with in-house written material. For example, a grammar exercise from a book can be preceded by an introduction and presentation of the grammar point written by one of the teachers. In this way it is possible to aim the material very sensitively at a particular group of students. In monolingual situations this can be particularly useful, and the students' mother tongue can be used for explanations, if necessary.

4. Producing your own material

Once the need for an initial mass of material has been satisfied, then teachers can be encouraged to write original self-access material or adapt their previously written classroom worksheets. In-house produced material is extremely valuable as it is inevitably more precisely geared to the needs of students than published material. Moreover, some of the more interesting activity types for learning' above are not easily to be found in published form. If all teachers pool their ideas and material it is possible to build up a reasonable self-access facility which all can use within a much shorter time than if each teacher works in isolation. This is a project which does need co-ordination and the agreeing of clear objectives before materials preparation begins in order to lend coherence and balance to the materials produced. One possibility is to allot to each teacher responsibility for an area that they are interested in e.g. pronunciation, listening, study-skills, etc. so that it is possible for one person at least to have an overview of how each section is developing. If possible, activity types and levels required should also be agreed and worked out beforehand. The clearer the brief, the faster the actual production can proceed. Students should be involved in building up the self-access facilities if at all possible and their opinions canvassed on what kind of material is needed and how it should best be organized. Students can also be encouraged to contribute texts, recordings, songs, advertisements, etc. which have caught their attention. Such materials are a valuable addition to any self-access centre because they reflect the needs and interests of the users as defined by them. In the same way it is also useful to get feedback from students about how they use the centre once it is in operation. Care needs to be taken to ensure that materials are attractively presented. Where possible, it is desirable for materials to be typed or word-processed, but neat handwritten materials can be perfectly acceptable where other facilities are not easily available. The important thing is to ensure that materials are consistent in terms of classification, layout, and standard headings. In this way a 'professional look' can be achieved even in the absence of sophisticated reprographic facilities.

Classification and access. When deciding on a classification system for self-access materials, the basic principle is to keep it simple. The simpler the system, the easier the access for students.

There are essentially two interrelated questions to consider:

1. How are you going to classify, i.e. what categories will you use?
2. How will students gain access to what they need?

The most basic and necessary classification categories for EFL are level and main focus, e.g. reading, grammar, etc. Beyond this it is highly desirable to have a few broad sub-divisions of the main focus, e.g. verbs, adjectives, nouns, etc. in the grammar section. Another useful classification category is activity type, e.g. dictation, game, etc. It is also useful to classify certain materials such as extensive reading and listening texts by topic and/or by text type. There are two ways in which students can gain access to self-study material: by browsing or by using a catalogue or card-index. While those who painstakingly compile the catalogues and card- indexes may wish that more people would use the latter method more often, the fact is that it seems to be human nature to browse, and most students (and teachers?) use this method to locate what they need. That being the case, the sheer physical organization and labelling of the material becomes as important, if not more so, than the catalogues. At this point the question of access needs to be looked at in conjunction with the various classification categories. Probably the most helpful way to organize the learning material for easy 'browsing' access is by level and main focus.

1. Level

Material at the appropriate language level is undoubtedly the first requirement for students working on their own, and therefore, if they are to be able to browse, the level needs to be marked clearly on the material itself. This can be done explicitly, i.e. BEG for beginner, INT for intermediate, etc. or with the use of numbers or letters, i.e. 1 = beginner, 2 = elementary, etc. or A = beginner, B = elementary, etc. (If preferred the lowest numbers and first letters can be used for the most advanced levels.) However, perhaps the clearest and most convenient way

of marking level is by colour coding, i.e. blue for beginner, yellow for elementary, etc. This has the great advantage of immediate accessibility to students. Once they know the colour for their level they can see at a glance which material is suitable for them. It also has the advantage of not 'using up' letters or numbers at this stage so that they may be used in the classification system to indicate something else.

2. Main focus

The best way to facilitate access to these categories is actually to group material physically according to main focus so that all the vocabulary material is in one place, all the listening material in another and so on, each section being clearly labelled. If the level of each item is clearly colour-coded, then access to both these categories is very straightforward. It is also necessary, however, to use a classification code to indicate the focus, and to mark the material with this code. This is necessary if there is to be a catalogue of the main focus areas and also enables the material to be replaced correctly after it has been removed from its location. The classification code can be a number, e.g. 1 = grammar, 2 = vocabulary, etc. but the disadvantage of this is that it can be difficult to learn. The most straightforward classification for this category is to use letters, namely the first letter of the category, e.g. R = reading, W = writing. The advantage of this system is that numbers can be used to identify a particular item of material within a category.

3. Sub-categories

The introduction of sub-categories within the main focus does complicate matters somewhat but this seems a small price to pay for the increased usefulness to students, in that such sub-categories enable them to search for, say, punctuation or spelling within the Writing section. However, it is advisable to keep the number of sub-divisions to a minimum so that it is easy to keep an overview of the system. One useful sub-category to mark is activity type. Another useful sub-category would be sub-focus, e.g. letters in Writing (main focus). The classification mark for the sub-categories can again consist of letters, thus leaving numbers to uniquely

mark an item of material within the sub-category. If the main category is indicated by one letter, e.g. L = listening, then the sub-category can be indicated by two or three letters separated from the first letter by a dot, e.g. L.DI indicates a dictation in the Listening section. In order to identify each piece of material in that category, numbers can now

be used, e.g. Item L.DI / 1, made up as follows:

- L main focus = listening
- .DI activity type = dictation
- /1 accession = the first example of this material.

4. Topic

If one has used physical location to indicate the whereabouts of reading, writing material, etc. then obviously such material cannot also be grouped according to topic, so access to topic will have to be through a topic card-index. In a situation, however, where topic is of primary concern, for example, in a school which does a lot of ESP, then there is a very strong argument for grouping material physically according to topic. In classifying material according to topic it is best to work within a predetermined framework rather than just assign topics as the fancy takes you, because this will tend to lead to a great proliferation of topics, many of which will become too specific and difficult to use. One such open-ended system which the author has encountered produced topics such as “Clay pots” and “Camels”. It is unlikely that anyone would actually search for material on these topics, and the function, therefore, becomes purely descriptive. If people are to make efficient use of a topic index to search for material, it is necessary to have a delimited system so that one has an overview and knows what one is likely to be able to find. Probably the most widely-used topic classification system in the world is the Dewey decimal system. This classification system does not lend itself very easily, however, to the needs of most EFL institutions. It is too detailed in some areas, e.g. philosophy, and not detailed enough in others, e.g. basic lexical areas such as every day activities. There is a need for a less formal and academic system. Appendix 1 contains an extract from a Topic Classification system specially

compiled for use in an EFL situation. It contains a fairly small number of broad categories which all have sub-categories within them. (The number of sub-categories can easily be expanded.) Where material in this book is classified by topic, it is this classification system which has been used, e.g. in 3.9 the topic is Natural world/Wildlife (birds: Nuthatch). In this example “Natural world” is the broad category, and “Wildlife” is a sub-category. Both these topics could be searched for in the classification system, (birds: Nuthatch) is the specific topic of this item which would not form part of the classification system and would be purely descriptive telling you more about the item you had found under “Natural world” and/or “Wildlife”.

5. *Indexes*

Indexes allow users of a self-access system to search more specifically for certain types of material than purely physical location (by, for example, main focus) or colour coding (for level). Features such as topic, activity type or text type, which may be ignored for the purposes of physical organization, can be classified and searched for by means of an index. A computer database can be very useful for indexing purposes. Computerized classification and access allows users of the system to search on several dimensions at once, e.g. for a dictation at lower intermediate level on the topic of aircraft construction. Computerized databases, as well as enabling you to search on screen, as it were, will automatically produce cards for card-indexes, catalogues, or lists of certain kinds of material so that users do not have to have access to the computer to benefit.

Vocabulary worksheets/Work cards

V1 DICTIONARY USE

'Use Your Dictionary' Chapter 1

V1-601

A guide to the 'Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English' and the 'Oxford Student's Dictionary of Current English'.

Chapter 1 - The Dictionary Entry

WS (7pp)

V4 VOCABULARY USE

A Family Tree

V4-601

A family tree where you have to work out the relationship between the people.

From 'Test Your Vocabulary' Book 1 by P Watcyn-Jones WC

Materials storage and display:

1. Papers and printed material

A lot of work goes into the production of worksheets and instruction sheets, etc. and it is, therefore, worth taking some trouble to ensure that they last as long as possible. To this end sheets of paper can be stuck on to card and laminated, covered in plastic film from a tear-off roll, or stored in plastic envelopes or paper envelopes. Careful storage can increase the life-span of materials that have taken a lot of time and trouble to produce. Each item (which may consist of a number of pages) can be stored in separate pocket folders, colour-coded for level. (For ease of access, the Key to each item is best stored together with the activity in the same folder. It can either be hidden from view in a separate envelope clearly marked “Key” or “Answers”, etc. or put on the reverse side of the task sheet.) If activities involve multiple copies of worksheets which students can write on, store these in a separate envelope in the folder, together with instructions to inform a teacher or supervisor when the last one is used. Masters can be filed away in a separate location ready to be photocopied or cyclostyled.

If there are no copying facilities available, students will have to copy out worksheets into their own books. Suitable storage then needs to be found for the pocket folders. Possibilities include: shelves with vertical divisions; open box-like containers, and plastic vertical file boxes (open). Label each different location or section of the study centre clearly and then label each piece of material with its location code so that it is easy to see where to get material and where to put it back. This aspect of display is very important for ease of access by students.

2. CD/DVD discs

CD/DVD discs can be stored together in a clear plastic envelope with the printed material which accompanies them. The envelopes can then be hung on rails. This system makes multi-media material easy to use and reduces the chances of misfiling.

Separate storage of cassettes and printed material is also possible, in which case cassettes need to be stored horizontally (so that titles can be read) in open

cassette holders so that they are visible and accessible. It should be immediately apparent which printed material goes with which cassette. This can be achieved by allocating the same number and classification code to two or more pieces of material which belong together, and clearly labelling them.

Staffing. It is ironic to think that when the idea of self-access learning was first introduced, there were fears expressed that teachers would become superfluous. In fact, the provision of self-access facilities involves a lot of work, mostly by teachers.

There are three main areas to consider in relation to staffing.

1. Preparing the materials and setting up the system

If an institution is investing in the provision of a study centre, then thought also needs to be given to providing teachers with time to prepare self-access materials to go into the centre. This can be done in a number of ways, of which the following are just examples:

- One or more teachers can be released from some or all of their teaching responsibility for a period of time. Releasing teachers full time has the advantage that they will not be distracted from materials preparation by teaching. On the other hand, teachers should not be kept out of the classroom so long that they begin to lose touch with what students need. If teachers are to be released part-time, the timetable should be arranged so that materials preparation time comes in usable blocks such as whole mornings or whole afternoons rather than the odd hour here and there.

- If the institution has terms or is closed to students at some time during the year, then the entire teaching staff can be employed for a period in the preparation of self-access materials. This has the advantage that a lot of material can be produced in a relatively short period of time and is particularly useful in the initial stages when there is little or no self-access material available. What has been stated above about clear objectives applies just as much in this situation. The difference is that a number of different areas can be tackled at once.

- Material, prepared by teachers in their own time, can be paid for at a given rate per item. With this system it is much easier to calculate a fair rate of remuneration, i.e. based on product rather than production time which may vary tremendously between one teacher and the next. Once again, however, a clear and detailed brief is absolutely necessary for all materials preparation. This is the best safeguard for all concerned.

- Standard reading and listening task sheets can be devised, which are applicable to any text of a particular genre. For example, a standard listening task for use with news broadcasts would focus on those elements common to all news broadcasts such as the number and order of the items; who they concern; where they take place; what kind of event is being described; personal reactions to the stories, etc. Standard tasks of this nature not only save on materials writing time, but they focus students' (and teachers'!) attention on the essential qualities of the genre in question. Standard tasks also make it very easy to add or change texts because new worksheets do not have to be written each time. This allows texts to reflect current events and interests of students. Indeed, they can contribute their own texts. (For examples of standard listening and reading tasks see 3.6, 3.17, and 3.18.)

- If resources are limited and there is no time or money available for materials production, a few evening workshops with liquid refreshment on hand can be a relatively painless way of providing an initial base of material and, promoting staff cohesion and solidarity! This may appear to be a Utopian ideal, but if teachers' enthusiasm is fired by an idea such as computer-assisted language learning or self-access learning, it is amazing what they can and do achieve in their own time through the formation of self-help groups and the sharing of ideas and materials.

2. Maintaining and adding to the system

Some system of maintenance is required such as a tray or box where users can put faulty tapes and damaged or dilapidated material. Staffing is necessary to oversee such a system, to generally keep the place tidy, check that material is not

mis-shelved and to effect repairs as and when necessary. It is also necessary to have someone responsible for the classification, labelling and preparation of new material, and for entering it into the system. It is also a good idea to keep some kind of statistical check on the use of materials. This can be done by asking students to place folders they have finished using into a tray. The tray is then emptied regularly (at least once a day) by whoever is responsible for supervising the study centre. Before returning the material to its correct place in the system, a tally mark can be made in an unobtrusive place inside the folder. This ensures that the frequency (or lack of it!) with which a particular item is used is recorded and gives valuable feedback to those engaged in stocking up the system. (It also means that there is less chance of material being mis-filed.)

3. Supervision and counseling

If the school sets up a study centre it is necessary to decide as a matter of policy whether it is to be staffed full-time, part-time, on demand (i.e. a member of staff is on call nearby) or not at all. There are at least three good reasons why institutions should provide at least part-time staffing for the study centre⁷:

- Students may need guidance initially and from time to time thereafter about how best to use the system, where to find certain material, etc. Although it should be possible for students to use the system completely unaided, in practice this demands quite a high degree of sophistication on the part of the student, even with the simplest and clearest of systems.

- Books and materials will disappear through carelessness, thoughtlessness, and dishonesty if the system is totally unsupervised. Not only is this very expensive, it also drastically reduces the efficiency, and reliability of the system.

4. Student involvement

It is a good idea to involve students in the maintenance and administration of their self-access centre. Factors such as the students' age and average length of stay in the institution will determine whether and to what extent such involvement is a practical proposition. If such help can be enlisted, then the advantages are

⁷ Wenden, A. L. (1991). *Learner strategies for learner autonomy*. London: Prentice Hall International.

many: students become more self-reliant and responsible, both as a body and as individuals, and they have more opportunities for getting to know the system well, and of influencing its development. In addition, institutions which just cannot afford to pay for the permanent staffing of a self-access centre, may be able to establish a rota system of volunteer student helpers to assist in the running and supervision of the system.

CONCLUSION

Self-access has tremendous potential: it can be a motor for change, influencing the attitudes of both learners and teachers, helping an institution move towards a greater degree of independence for its students. But the potential can only be realized by paying careful attention to learners' needs, and by adopting a broad view of the way in which self-access facilities can be used. This can be done by careful creation, collection, and organization of materials; close attention to the need to help learners use materials to their best advantage; and an open-minded attitude towards alternative uses of self-access facilities, which should cater for a variety of different types of students and also allow them to work in pairs and groups. In the end, self-access can never be the only way to learn; it is one way - but it is a way which can encompass many ways, and therein lies its greatest strength.

So, as the conclusion we can indicate the following advantages of this form of learning is that students at the very least set the pace of their work. Depending on the individual center, students can also set the level and content of their work. Students can use these centers voluntarily or can have assignments to complete there. And the major advantage, therefore, is flexibility, with the purpose of giving the students themselves the opportunity to tailor the course more to their learning needs and styles than a more traditional mode of teaching.

Use of multiple technologies in a more independent setting has been shown to improve motivation and increase students' ability to work independently by taking more responsibility for their own learning. Students also report feeling more "empowered" by such modes of instruction.

Some disadvantages of this mode has basically to do with the ability of both students and teachers to adapt and integrate this method effectively. Many students are not used to working independently, creating the need to provide guidance as to the use of this kind of center, at least in the beginning.

Self-access learning is an individualization of learning in which each learner interacts in a unique way with controlled or uncontrolled learning environments ranging from self-access centers, through self-access language learning integrated into taught courses, to opportunities for authentic language use beyond institutional control.

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INTERNET RESOURCES

1. <http://nechodimnaprednasky.sk/nahlad-prednasky/2848/english-language-teaching-methodology>
2. <http://www.englishraven.com/methodology.html>
3. http://www.alte.org/cando/alte_cando.pdf
4. <http://edition.tefl.net/ideas/speak/will-for-predictions/>
5. <http://myenglishpages.com/blog/communicative-activities/>
6. <http://www.google.com>
7. <http://www.native-english.com>
8. <http://www.learn-english.com>