

"Big Brother is helping you: Supporting self-access language learning with a student monitoring system" focuses on the approaches the University of New Zealand took to manage the amount of learning assistance non English native speakers require while attending a university. The university made the observation that many students do not seek to improve their language skills. As a result of this, it creates a hidden cost to the university itself. Therefore, there is a need for extended support outside the classroom. The staff recruited for this specific language lab possesses a background in language teaching. As a result, the staff receives formal training such as reading papers and books on the topic of learner autonomy and self-access. The staff also attends workshops as well as observing other staff members while they teach. In the lab, the students learn how to edit papers, write accordingly, and a log is kept on the computer as to how often they attend.

The article highlights how there are sound and practical reasons for offering lab support. It also points out how there is a real challenge to evaluating learning as there is little assessment in relationship to objectives. On the other hand, there are justifiable reasons for offering self-access as complementary to or another solution for classroom teaching, particularly in regards to the opportunities for students to improve their learning. As a result, the area of assessing a self-access lab remains a challenging one. However, the systems described in this article help to get a more comprehensive picture of the work students do in a flexible learning environment

Depending on what kind of curriculum being offered, a self-access lab at an institution such as the University of New Zealand can be a very beneficial solution to providing additional support for learner needing to improve their language skills. A lab gives students the autonomy to pick and choose how much actual support they require rather than following the recommendations of the teacher. Also, the opportunity for students to receive individualized attention allows for the instructor to take a closer look at the student's challenges. The one on one opportunity may help the learner find a solution to language struggles which couldn't have been addressed in a big classroom.

This article brought to my attention there are many opportunities to alternative methods of classroom learning other than just classroom teaching. If students are challenged by working in a large classroom, their skills can be addressed by working one on one with the student. The solution to learning is not just the classroom. A student can better thrive in a learning lab where he/she has the opportunity and choice to pick and choose what he/she would like to focus on. This also increases student motivation and encourages the student to realize there are many avenues to developing language skills and opportunities to learn them, outside of just the instructor.