



THE USE OF THE LANGUAGE LABORATORY IN A FEDERAL UNIVERSITY:

Reflections on the relevance of using the language lab for English learners

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RESUMO: Atualmente, com o apoio da internet e das novas tecnologias digitais de informação e comunicação (NTICS), como os smartphones e computadores, o aluno tem a oportunidade de usufruir de uma série de serviços que podem ajudar no seu processo de aprendizado, como as mídias sociais, os bate-papos, os materiais interativos e outros. Dessa forma, os recursos tecnológicos vem auxiliando a aprendizagem de língua inglesa e demonstrando diversos benefícios para os estudantes. Assim, esta pesquisa tem como objetivo identificar as razões que colaboram para que o laboratório de linguagem seja subutilizado pelos discentes do curso, além de destacar os benefícios que o espaço oferece para o processo de aprendizagem e, a partir dos resultados apresentados, contribuir para uma melhor utilização dos recursos disponíveis. Para isto a pesquisa foi fundamentada nas teorias de Moran (2000), Gomes e Moita (2016) que analisam a importância da tecnologia na educação; em Oliveira (2008) que conceitua a autonomia e como fomentá-la nas aulas de línguas, além de outros estudiosos. Para alcançar a finalidade deste estudo, foi realizada uma pesquisa qualitativa do tipo estudo de caso que envolveu uma coleta de dados através de um questionário online, realizado com os discentes do curso de Letras-Inglês da UFPA. Como resultado da pesquisa, observou-se que o laboratório de linguagem favorece a autonomia de aprendizagem do inglês, oferece um ambiente propício para a prática e aprimoramento das habilidades linguísticas, proporciona o acesso a recursos tecnológicos que ajudam a desenvolver a aprendizagem de forma independente e interativa, além de outros benefícios.

Palavras-chave: Laboratório de Linguagem; Aprendizagem autônoma; Aprendizagem de línguas

ABSTRACT: Currently, with the support of the internet and the new digital information and communication technologies (NICS), such as smartphones and computers, students have the opportunity to enjoy a series of services that can help their learning process, such as social media, chats, interactive materials and others. In this way, technological resources have been helping the learning of the English language and demonstrating several benefits for students. Therefore, this research aims at identifying the reasons that collaborate to the fact that the language laboratory is underused by the students of the course, besides highlighting the

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benefits that the space offers to the students' learning process and, based on the results presented, contributing to a better use of the available resources. For this, the research was based on the theories of Moran (2000), Gomes and Moita (2016) who analyze the importance of technology in education; in Oliveira (2008) who conceptualizes autonomy and how to foster it in language classes, as well as other authors. To achieve the purpose of this study, a qualitative research of the case study type was conducted, which involved data collection through an online questionnaire, realized with the students of the English language course at UFPA. As a result, it was observed that the language lab favors the autonomy of English learning, offers a propitious place for practicing and improving language skills, provides access to technological resources that help develop learning in an independent and interactive way, and other benefits.

Keywords: Language Laboratory. autonomy; language learning;

INTRODUCTION

With the advent of such digital technologies, books, radios, and televisions have been replaced by modern devices that are capable of conducting a globally diffused and contextualized language learning process (SCHLINDWEIN and SORTE, p. 46).

The implementation of new information and communication technologies (NTICs), which according to Velloso (2014) are "technologies and methods for communication that emerged in the context of the Information Revolution (...) gradually developed since the second half of the 1970s", in language learning, such as Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) and Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL), has brought a range of new tools that assist in the language teaching and learning process as smartphones, computers, tablets, applications and others (GOUVEIA, 2018, p. 21).

Before CALL and MALL emerged, the language laboratory was created in 1950, with different resources available to students, where they had the opportunity to record their speech, listen to it, and compare it with the recorded voice of a native speaker. However, this model did not succeed, since individual booths did not allow for student interaction or access to updated materials (SCHLINDWEIN and SORTE, 2014, p. 45).

Therefore, with the evolution of technological devices, language laboratories began to present new learning support tools, such as computers with headphones connected to the internet, language-specific programs and applications, access to contextualized materials, and

others (SCHLINDWEIN and SORTE, 2014, p. 46). In that manner, English language learning became more meaningful, expanding possibilities beyond traditional teaching methods. According to Paiva (2001):

The booths that isolated students with their headphones and individual recorders, almost always preventing interaction with their peers, give way to multimedia laboratories with access to the internet. The new laboratories break down the walls of the classroom by enabling communication with the world, bringing varied possibilities for interaction with native speakers or learners of the target language into the school. (PAIVA, 2001, p.93, tradução nossa)²

Regarding the Language Laboratory at the Federal University of Pará, Bragança campus, this space is ideal for students to develop autonomy in their own learning process in regards to acquiring the English language, as the environment offers technologies resources that can facilitate the process of learning, as the SANAKO LAB 100, besides 28 computers equipped with tools that support students as headsets, webcams and other resources (SANAKO blog, 2023).

Another advantage that the Language Laboratory offers is a safe and controlled environment for students to practice linguistics skills, which can increase the student's confidence and reduce anxiety regarding the use of the language, which can consequently directly influence the student's learning process. However, even though the language laboratory is a beneficial space for the learning process, it has been observed that there is underutilization of this space by students in the English Language course. (SANAKO blog, 2023).

Concerning this underutilization of the Language Laboratory, it is understood that it can represent a significant loss of learning opportunities for students in the English Language course, since the process of acquiring the English language is left to the responsibility of the student, considering that the English Language course offers only one language-focused discipline per semester, which may not be enough to ensure that the student develops the necessary skills and competencies of the English language.

Due to the underutilization of the Language Laboratory, the main objective of this work is to identify the reasons for the underutilization of this space by students, in addition to highlighting the benefits of the language laboratory for the autonomous learning process of

² As cabines que isolavam os alunos com seus fones de ouvido e gravadores individuais, impedindo quase sempre a interação com os demais colegas, cedem lugar aos laboratórios multimídia com acesso à Internet. Os novos laboratórios rompem as paredes da sala de aula ao propiciar a comunicação com o mundo, trazendo para dentro da escola possibilidades variadas de interação com nativos ou aprendizes da língua alvo. (PAIVA, 2001, p.93)

English language students. Therefore, the results presented throughout the research can contribute to a better use of the resources available in the language laboratory for the learning process of students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Autonomous Learning

According to Paiva (2006, p.82 , apud LITTLE, 1991, p.4), the concept of autonomy is "the ability to plan, monitor and evaluate learning activities, and necessarily encompasses both the content and the learning process", in that way, it is understood that autonomy directly involves the ability to identify one's own learning needs, as well as to seek resources and strategies to achieve one's objectives. In addition, it is necessary to define realistic and achievable goals, and to be able to evaluate one's progress and adjust the learning plan, if necessary.

Given this, Paiva (2009) emphasizes that autonomy guarantees to the learner the freedom and right to make his own choices during the construction of knowledge. Hence, it is understood that autonomy is related to the responsibility and independence that the learner acquires throughout their learning process, where the learner must have control over the management and selection of suitable learning contents, as well as intervention in assessment and planning of study projects.

Regarding the autonomous learner, Oliveira (1999, p.66) highlights that they should be "actively engaged in learning, aware of their strengths and weaknesses." As the learner should have the ability to analyze strategies and resources necessary to overcome the difficulties encountered throughout his learning journey.

However, Oliveira (1999, p.67) underscores that without the support of English teaching specialists, autonomous learning will rarely be successful, even for adult learners or those with advanced levels of the language. In that manner, Dickinson (1994, pg 4) supports the idea previously presented when he emphasizes that autonomous learning is a process in which teachers and students share responsibility, with students becoming increasingly self-sufficient in their learning.

It can be observed that autonomy in foreign language learning is directly related to the assignments that the learner imposes on their studies, in order to gradually achieve their goals

during their academic journey. However, it is necessary for autonomous learners to consider the importance of the teacher during this process, as they play the role of facilitator of learning (LITTLE, 2003).

In this sense, Huew (2007) emphasizes that the teacher should determine the objectives on behalf of the students and select appropriate approaches and methodologies tailored to the needs of each learner, as well as choosing suitable materials that will stimulate students to achieve their learning objectives, Huew (2007) further emphasizes that:

What can be observed is that the various authors cited agree that teachers are changing their traditional role, incorporating new roles. They have become advisors, monitors, and even guides when working alongside their students, helping them to develop better learning techniques. They transform into helpers and facilitators when offering suggestions and guidance in the adoption of learning strategies (Huew, 2007, p.2, tradução nossa).³

In that way, it is understood that the teacher has a fundamental role in the construction and organization of content that meets the needs of the learner, as well as guiding them regarding the individual activities proposed by him, making adjustments when necessary to the student's learning.

Furthermore, the teacher is able to provide feedback in accordance with each student's performance, allowing the learner to gain insight into the progression of their learning journey. Therefore, with the support of the teacher, students have the opportunity to become more independent and responsible as they will have access to diverse and appropriate materials for their level of learning, allowing them to continue their studies safely and without the constant presence of the teacher.

Thus, it can be concluded that learner autonomy is related to the responsibility that the learner acquires throughout their studies, where they must actively participate in different learning and self-assessment processes, considering their needs and objectives to be achieved.

2. Technologies in the language learning process

³ O que se pode observar é que os diversos autores citados concordam com o fato de que os professores estão mudando o seu papel tradicional, incorporando novos papéis. Eles se tornaram conselheiros, monitores e até mesmo guias quando estão trabalhando junto com seus alunos, ajudando-os a desenvolver melhores técnicas para a aprendizagem. Eles se transformam em ajudantes e facilitadores quando oferecem sugestões e orientação na adoção de estratégias de aprendizado (HUEW, [2007] p.2)

The new technologies when incorporated into the English language acquisition process have contributed to facilitate learning, making the experience more attractive and complete. The importance of technologies in educational practices is undeniable, since they allow the amplification of the concept of class, have the ability to establish new connections between the presential and the virtual, between the “being together and being connected at a distance”⁴ (MORAN, 2000, p. 137).

In education, the use of technological tools has always been present, as in “books, radios, newspapers, films, tape recorder, slide projector, labs, videos etc” (MONTEIRO, 2020, p. 33, tradução nossa)⁵. In this way, Monteiro (2020) says that media materials have always had an essential role in the teaching-learning process, since they have been able to enrich and diversify educational practices.

In this sense, it is valid to understand which technologies actively contribute to the English language teaching-learning process, since these tools can modify the student's life in different aspects, “providing him with the extension of the teaching-learning space, previously restricted to the classroom”⁶. (LIMA, 2013, p.04)

Therefore, Schlindwein e Sorte (2014), in their studies about the emergence of technologies in English language teaching, have observed that in the late 1950s, the first language laboratory was created, in which students could record their speech, listen to them and compare them to native speakers. Thus, it is understood that from this historical moment on, various approaches and modalities of language teaching and learning related to technology have emerged over the years, such as CALL (Computer-Assisted Language Learning).

As far as CALL is concerned, this is a language teaching and learning approach that makes use of information and communication technology, mainly the computer. Based on Warschauer's studies (1996) it is possible to see that this approach has undergone some changes over the years.

Initially, Call was based on computer software that provided grammar and vocabulary exercises, as well as listening and reading comprehension activities. Over time, CALL has evolved to include multimedia features such as video, audio, and pictures, allowing for a more immersive and interactive experience for learners. In addition, Warschauer (1996) stresses in

⁴ “estar juntos e estar conectados a distância”(MORAN, 2000, p. 137)

⁵ “ livros, rádios, jornais, filmes, gravador, projetor de slide, laboratórios, vídeos etc” (MONTEIRO, 2020, p. 33)

⁶ “proporcionando a ele o alargamento do espaço de ensino-aprendizagem, até então restrito à sala de aula”. (LIMA, 2013, p.04)

his research that the arrival of the Internet and its incorporation into CALL resources has enabled CALL to become a global medium and an unlimited source of authentic materials.

In this context, Schlindwein e Sorte (2014, p.47, our translation) emphasize that “it is the internet that presents itself as one of the most relevant tools nowadays when it comes to learning a language”⁷. Thus, with the emergence of CALL and its integration into the various teaching approaches, new possibilities emerge to be explored. Besides what is currently known as CALL, virtual learning environments (VLEs) and Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) are also being introduced.

As far as VLEs are regarded, they are a set of electronic teaching-learning tools that “can organize content, track activities and provide the student with online support and electronic communication.”⁸ (PEREIRA, SCHMITT e DIAS, 2007, p.6, our translation), this way, they can provide students with a flexible, personalized learning experience that can be tailored to their needs and learning pace.

In this way, technological advances have brought a range of new tools to support language learning, and this is what Monteiro (2020, p.33) brings us when he states that:

Language teaching never had so many possibilities of support in terms of technological materiality as nowadays, given the technologies followed by the different forms and learning environments available. (...) Virtual learning environments provide interactivity between the student and the object of his interest and represent a motivation, stimulating the student's desire to interact and organize his knowledge, expanding his vision of the world and his knowledge. The interaction of the student with the Internet enables an innovation in the ways of reading and writing. (MONTEIRO, 2020, p.33, tradução nossa⁹)

Therefore, it is understood that the integration of these digital devices in language teaching provides dynamics that are not present in traditional classes, such as "sites for listening, speaking, writing and reading practice, online dictionaries, videos, music, digital books, blogs, online courses and applications (SOUZA E SOUSA,2021, p.19). As a result, the student can have more autonomy in choosing what fits his needs and particularities, increasing his performance during learning.

⁷ “é a internet que se apresenta como uma das ferramentas mais relevantes nos dias atuais quando o assunto é aprender uma língua” (Schlindwein; Sorte, 2014, p.47)

⁸ “Podem organizar conteúdos, acompanhar as atividades e fornecer ao estudante suporte on-line e comunicação eletrônica.” (PEREIRA, SCHMITT e DIAS, 2007, p.6)

⁹ O ensino de línguas nunca teve tantas possibilidades de apoio em termos de materialidade tecnológica como nos dias de hoje, dadas as tecnologias acompanhadas pelas diferentes formas e ambientes de aprendizagem disponíveis. (...) Os ambientes virtuais de aprendizagem proporcionam interatividade entre o aluno e o objeto de seu interesse e representam uma motivação, estimulando o desejo do aluno de interagir e organizar seu conhecimento, ampliando sua visão de mundo e seu conhecimento. A interação do aluno com a internet possibilita uma inovação nas formas de ler e escrever. (MONTEIRO, 2020, p.33)

In regard to Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL), this refers to technologies with mobile supports, such as cell phones, which since its creation have contributed significantly to the teaching-learning process, offering personalized teaching based on applications, educational games, audios, and videos that allow the practice of language skills anywhere and anytime, promoting greater flexibility and autonomy in the learning process. (GOUVEIA, 2018).

In face of this, the implementation of new technologies in foreign language teaching helps to improve the student's understanding of the language, because they promote a more interesting education, besides helping the learners with the process of developing their language skills, enabling positive results during their learning.

3. Language Laboratory

The language teaching laboratories have a significant importance when it comes to the effective and dynamic learning of a second language. The access to separate booths or to computers with technological resources makes possible the development of practical activities that contribute to the student's linguistic improvement. In this way, Kloss[20–] states that the language laboratory can be understood as a “a physical tool that facilitates social interaction and promotes the development of LI”, since this “takes on a mediating function, which encourages happy and relaxed communicative practices in the language”.

Given this, Menezes (2019) points out that language laboratories increase the chances of interaction in the real context of language use, in which, consequently, they expand “the input and opportunities for language acquisition”.¹⁰ Therefore, it is understood that the space can offer different resources that facilitate the learning of English content, making the experience more meaningful, real, and motivating.

In a language lab, Kloss [20–, p.04] states that the students “have the possibility to interact, collaborate and produce knowledge”¹¹, contributing to “the development of the most diverse and varied knowledge production activities in the target language”¹². In this way, students have the opportunity to practice the language with different activities, positively improving their learning performance. Following the same thought, Juliano (2006)

¹⁰ o input e as oportunidades de aquisição do idioma (MENEZES 2019, p.)

¹¹ têm a possibilidade de interagir, colaborar e produzir conhecimento” (KLOSS, s.d, p.04)

¹² “o desenvolvimento das mais diversas e variadas atividades de produção de conhecimento no idioma alvo”(KLOSS, s.d, p.04)

emphasizes the importance that the space provides to the learner, in which he promotes the real interaction of language use.

The laboratory is the place where experimental studies are conducted with the practical objective of simulating situations, in this case, everyday situations of language use, putting the learner in contact with its uses, customs, formal and colloquial language, and cultural aspects of the target language. After the teacher, it is the didactic resource that offers the most individualized, autonomous and also collective help, according to the lab's layout. One of its characteristics is both the self-analysis that the student can do and the linguistic improvement that he/she is seeking.(JULIANO, 2006, p.62, tradução nossa)¹³

From this perspective, Pitarello e Belim (2013), when discussing the use of the language lab in English language learning, claims that the computer facilitates personalized learning, promoting the growth of individual autonomy. As a consequence, Juliano (2006) points out that the computer streamlines connectivity by integrating all devices into a unified connection. This enhances interactive experiences, enabling seamless interactions across various media formats on a single device.

According to Juliano (2006), the computer can be seen as an ally during educational practices through teaching-learning activities, such as simulation of real situations for the practice of creating and discussing ideals; games that combine fun and learning; distance learning that enables online courses; educational programs such as interactive stories and encyclopedias, Communication through mailing lists, chat rooms, webpages of World Wide Web (www)¹⁴, and other tools connecting people in many ways.

From this, it is understood that computers and technology play a significant role in improving English learning nowadays. The most common examples are mobile internet that provides access to apps, video tutorials, audios, interactive games, practice exercises and others. In addition, the learners can use technology to learn English at their own rhythm and according to their specific needs, as there are apps and online learning platforms that offer personalized lessons, allowing learners to choose the materials they want to study and receive immediate feedback on their performance.

¹³ O laboratório configura-se como o lugar onde se faz estudo experimental com objetivos práticos de simulação de situações cotidianas de uso da língua, colocando o aprendiz em contato com os seus usos, costumes, linguagem formal e coloquial e aspectos culturais da língua-alvo. Depois do professor, é o recurso didático que mais oferece ajuda individualizada, autônoma e também coletiva conforme a disposição do laboratório. Uma das suas características é tanto a auto-análise que o aluno pode fazer, quanto o aprimoramento linguístico que ele busca.(JULIANO, 2006, p.62)

¹⁴ World Wide Web: A document system that brings together information in the form of text, images, video, and sound, in stand-alone or multimedia form.(PAIVA, 2001, p.93)

Based on this conception, we verify that the integration of computers as a resource for learning English helps to keep the student more interested and motivated, because it allows the access to many online materials, the production of new knowledge and interactivity. Therefore, by combining his studies with the resources that the computer offers, the student also has the chance to develop his learning autonomy by planning specific contents that can be directed and organized by himself.

However, although the computer, in the educational context, is understood as a tool allied to the learning process, the role of the teacher is indispensable, since the teacher has the main responsibility to guide and mediate the teaching. About this, Martins(2012, p.06) states that a teacher's presence is crucial for various tasks that cannot be fulfilled by automated systems or technology alone. These tasks include providing instructional guidance, supporting and monitoring students' progress, motivating learners, and potentially encompassing other responsibilities that are unique to human educators.

Regarding the use of the language lab as a space for interaction, sociability and learning, Kloss(2007) points out that the learner must have in mind his study goals when entering the space, because the responsibility lies with the student to identify the resources at their disposal in the laboratory and employ them effectively, aiming to enhance and broaden their understanding of language. Hence, besides being necessary to understand the relevance of space during study practices, the student must know how to properly use the tools in accordance with his study goals.

For this reason, it is understood that laboratories equipped with technological resources such as computers, internet, microphones and webcams, can facilitate the student's learning of a second language, where he/she has the possibility of learning by practicing and interacting. However, despite the numerous possibilities of online and interactive activities that the laboratory makes available to students, it is necessary to take into account their study goals, so that the use of the space occurs in a pertinent and appropriate manner.

3.1 UFPA's language laboratory

The language laboratory at the Federal University of Pará-Campus Bragança was a project idealized so that the students of the undergraduate course in English could develop practical activities in the English language area and, consequently, develop their learning autonomy. According to the website of the faculty of foreign languages (FALEST), the space

can provide the learner of English with: the learning of language skills; the development of learning autonomy; mastery of the specific and theoretical-methodological content of its teaching; and the identification of social and cultural issues in different contexts.

For this purpose, the space provides access to the internet and the availability of a variety media resources that provide individualized learning, the selection of diversified online materials, the possibility to study independently and to perform practical activities that contribute to the development of the language comprehension and production skills (FALEST's website). In this way, the language lab offers a series of opportunities to learn and practice the English language, allowing the performance of many activities, such as listening comprehension, model imitation, reading practice, conversation, pair or group discussions, interpretation, quizzes and others.(SANAKO blog)

One of the main attributes of the language lab is the presence of Sanako Software, which according to the official website “the program offers tools that will keep your students motivated and excited while they acquire the language skills they need to develop both personally and professionally.”. In addition, the system also offers the option of recording the student's audio, where they are stored in individual folders on the main computer in the room, so the student can have access to the audio recordings during their studies and have a perception of their own developments in language learning.

Another characteristic of the language lab is the presence of the LAB 100 system, a language lab that provides many practical activities for the student, where it provides an audio panel for each user, enabling the learner to handle the digital recording units on his own. According to the Sanako's official website, the student’s audio panels allows many functions that are easy to operate, such as “Rew, to rewind the master and student track; Speak, to play the master track and record the student track; Recap, to return to the beginning of the sentence; Play, to play the audio; Stop, to stop the playback and recordings and Fast-forward the student’s track”.

Regarding the tools available to students, the Language Lab has 28 computers with internet connection, and each machine comes with SLH-07 headsets, student's audio panels, a webcam, a keyboard and a mouse. Besides the technological accessories, the space has physical resources available to meet the needs and the students comfort, such as lockers to store their personal objects, tables and chairs that provide students with adequate accommodation for learning and practicing the language, and a central air conditioning system, which improves the quality of the room.

In view of this, it is understood that the Language Lab offers a set of technological and physical resources that facilitate the learning of the English student, where he has the possibility to learn by practicing. Besides, by noticing his evolution, the student can conduct his studies in a constant and autonomous way, seeking improvement through activities that stimulate the exposure to the target language. Therefore, by using the laboratory for educational purposes, the student becomes actively involved in the exercises of learning English, making the experience more attractive and motivating.

METHODOLOGY

Language laboratories offer many benefits to the language learner, whose main purpose is to develop the language skills of the learner, as well as their autonomy regarding their own learning, but many students are unaware or have no interest in using the space during their studies;

Therefore, this research aimed to identify the reasons that contribute to the fact that the space is underused by the students of the course, and to highlight the benefits that the language lab offers to the students' learning process and, based on the results presented, contribute to a better use of the resources available in the space.

To reach the proposed objectives, a quali-quantitative methodology of the case study type was adopted for this study, since it is a research that aims at describing real situations in a particular context and to collect and analyze numerical and statistical data to examine the research hypotheses. Together, it was realized a bibliographic research conducted through Google Scholar tools and didactic books, to build the literature review of this research, besides contributing to the discussion about the benefits and reasons for the underutilization of the language lab.

It became necessary to organize qualitative research because it is from this that we can “understand, describe, and sometimes explain social phenomena from within in different ways.”(FLICK, 2007, apud. PAIVA, 2019, p. 13, our translation). Furthermore, Paiva (2019, p. 13, our translation) emphasizes that this research type “happens in the real world”¹⁵, which means that the perceptions and interpretations of the participants are considered from the context in which they are inserted and the society to which they belong.

¹⁵ “acontece no mundo real” (PAIVA, 2019, p.13)

“compreender, descrever e, algumas vezes, explicar fenômenos sociais, a partir do seu interior, de diferentes formas” (FLICK, 2007, apud. PAIVA, 2019, p. 13)

Also, for the occurrence of the research, the case study was conducted with the purpose of producing knowledge about the facts presented during this study. In this manner, Paiva (2019, p.65, tradução nossa) defines the objectives of this type of research in his manual of linguistic studies as a “a particular case consisting of an individual or a group of individuals in a specific context”¹⁶.

In addition, the literature search was conducted in order to gather information and data that have already been analyzed by other researchers on the same theme and approach of this study. For Paiva(2019, p.59, tradução nossa), this type of research “aims to contextualize and show what already exists about the investigated object”¹⁷, because in the author's view, the analysis of other theories contributes to the substantiation of the study.

For the data collection, we opted to organize a questionnaire¹⁸ for the students of the English language course at UFPA who use or have used the language laboratory at the UFPA Bragança campus for educational purposes, so that we could identify the reasons for the underutilization of the space. In this sense, the questionnaire was necessary because it presents as ease and efficiency in collecting information refers to the ability to gather data or knowledge in a manner that is convenient, straightforward, and without excessive effort or wastage of resources. (PAIVA, 2019), besides that, the data from this research will be collected by using an online questionnaire, from the Google Forms platform, containing open and closed questions, in which the link will be sent to the students via whatsapp in the groups of each class.

The questionnaire was formulated based on the studies and findings from the literature review of this research. The open questions were elaborated to understand more precisely the vision and perspective of the participants. It is worth mentioning that the form link was sent to 4 classes of the English-Language course at UFPA Bragança campus, in which there were approximately 28 students in each one, but only 14 responded in total.

Moreover, the discussion of these results will be based on the data collected through the bibliographic research about the following themes: Autonomy, Technologies and language labs in the process of English language learning, so that at the end of the discussion one may

¹⁶ “caso particular constituído de um indivíduo ou de um grupo de indivíduos em um contexto específico”(PAIVA, 2019, p.65)

¹⁷ “tem por objetivo contextualizar e mostrar o que já existe sobre o objeto investigado” (PAIVA, 2019, p.59)

¹⁸https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeJntFGeKJA-uD4Oc_fm3uCEjbTZCt8lqjwZr5S1hKJ2lLexg/viewform?usp=pp_url

have a clear view of the reasons for underutilization of the space and the benefits when using the language lab to learn English.

DISCUSSIONS AND RESULTS

According to Juliano (1996, p. 63), language laboratories are spaces that offer individualized, independent and group help to the second language learner, promoting a closer approach to the culture and customs of the target language, besides the linguistic improvement and the autonomy of their own learning. Thus, the results presented during this research show that the technological resources available in the language lab make the English learning experience more attractive and effective, where students can learn and practice the language in a more dynamic and collaborative way.

In addition, it was found that the comfort and tranquility of the place is a significant factor for the realization of English learning activities, because the space offers good lighting, is organized, provides physical resources such as tables, comfortable chairs, lockers, and computers with Internet access, facilitating the search for materials needed during the studies.

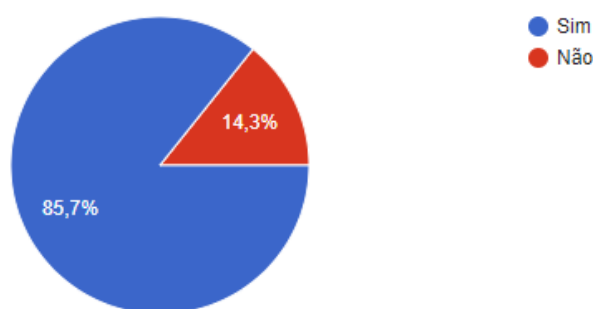
Still in relation to the results of this research, the data collected shows that the language lab also favors the development of learning autonomy, because it encourages more interest in students through the availability of technological equipment that facilitates access to other resources that are often not worked in the classroom, such as websites specialized in English teaching. However, the participants affirmed that the assistance of the monitor/tutor is necessary during the practice of the activities, as it contributes to the students' learning and development, especially when they do not know how to conduct their studies in a totally autonomous way.

Concerning the underuse of the language lab by the course's students, the third question: "In your opinion, does the language lab favor the development of your learning autonomy? If yes, how?" This questionnaire allowed the perception that factors such as insecurity, the constant need for the teacher's assistance during activities, the lack of interaction, the absence of new teaching approaches, the lack of information about the resources the space offers, and the lack of knowledge about the activities proposed by the Sanako software, this leads to reduced or poor use of the space by students, in which they do not use the space or use it insufficiently to ensure the achievement of their study goals, leading them to not return to the space or only with the class when led by the teacher.

Therefore, based on the information collected in the questionnaire, it was concluded that the language lab is a space that promotes greater contact with the language in its native form, performing a crucial role in the process of learning English, especially for students who are in the process of developing their communication skills and language acquisition.

The analysis of the data collected in this research was based on the information provided by the students/participants. The main goals of this analysis were to examine and interpret the results from the collected data in order to evaluate the consistency of the research, identify possible errors or limitations, and mainly contribute to the scientific knowledge about the importance of the language laboratory in the English learning process, as well as to provide relevant research to the academic and professional community.

Chart 1- information about the use of language laboratory by the students
Você já utilizou o laboratório de linguagem para aprender ou praticar a língua inglesa?
14 respostas



Source: Designed by the author, 2023.

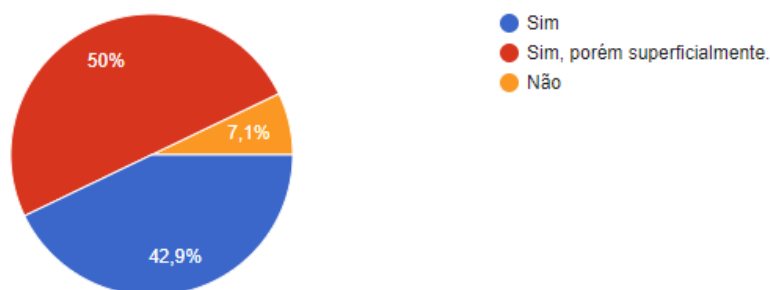
According to the information presented in chart 1, it is possible to infer that the Language Laboratory of the Universidade Federal do Pará (UFPA) can be a very valuable environment for the English learning process. The research revealed that most of the students (12) have already used this space for language learning purposes, while only two students stated that they had never used it.

As for these two students, it is reasonable to consider that they may have their own justifications for not using the laboratory, so we asked the students in general their opinion, in the Graphic 2, about their knowledge of the resources present in the language laboratory in order to understand their familiarity with the space.

Chart 2- Students' knowledge about the laboratory's resource

Você tem conhecimento dos recursos disponíveis no laboratório de linguagem?

14 respostas



Source: Designed by the author, 2023.

Analyzing chart 2, it is possible to observe that the participating students classified their knowledge about the resources available in the language lab as follows: 7 students affirmed having superficial knowledge, while only 6 students claimed to have complete knowledge, and one student claimed to have no knowledge at all. It is important to note that the aforementioned students, who do not use the facility to learn language, are included among those who said they did not fully know the resources of the laboratory.

However, it is worth noting that even among the students who claimed to have concrete knowledge about the lab's resources (a total of 6 students), there are still a larger number of students (8) who do not demonstrate domain of these resources. Among these students, 2 had never used the lab space, which may justify their lack of knowledge about the available resources or may be just a motivation for not using the space.

Therefore, these data suggest that the lack of familiarity with the resources available in the language laboratory may be an important factor for students choosing not to use it. Moreover, the lack of use of the space by some students may be influenced by different reasons, which range from the lack of knowledge to other personal reasons or learning preferences.

In this way, data like this point to a barrier, since the lack of knowledge about the available resources of the laboratory may limit the use of the laboratory in its full effectiveness, thus, it is important to highlight that the full use of the language laboratory may offer significant benefits for English language learning.

As Menezes (2019) and Juliano (2006, p.69) point out, the language laboratory has the potential to increase interaction with the real world, since the available resources increase the opportunities for language acquisition. In this way, the resources available in the space, such

as access to computers that integrate in a single machine access to the internet, language learning software, games, etc., provide the possibility of interacting with native speakers, contributing significantly to the improvement of students' proficiency in the language, since the space, can assume the role of mediator and stimulate diversified communicative practices. (KLOSS----).

In the third question we decided to collect personal responses about the development of autonomous learning in the language laboratory in order to understand their opinions, experiences and perspectives. For this, we elaborate the following question: “In your opinion, does the language laboratory help you develop your learning autonomy? If yes, how?”. The sample data reported that all participants(14) agreed that this space favors English learning autonomy for several reasons, such as: a wide variety of technological resources and materials like books, audios, videos and websites specialized in English teaching, thereby, they have the flexibility to explore these resources according to their individual interests and needs, allowing them to take control of their own learning.

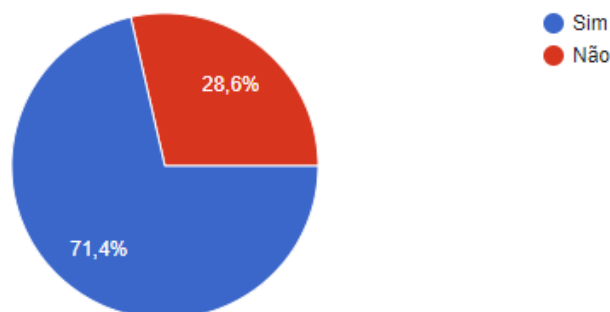
Moreover, they have the freedom to explore these resources according to their individual interests and needs, allowing them to take control of their own learning. Students also responded that the space offers the flexibility to choose the time and rhythm of study that best suits them, so this allows them to monitor their own progress, correct mistakes and improve their skills autonomously. Therefore, we can conclude that the language lab promotes English learning autonomy by offering access to varied resources, intensive language practice, flexible schedules, development of learning strategies ,immediate feedback, collaboration and interaction with other students. It allows them to take an active role in their own learning process and develop self-direction skills throughout life.

In chart 3 it is possible to notice that although some students claim to know the laboratory's resources (6) and some (8) do not know it entirely, the data in the chart 3 show that most students (10) are aware of the benefits that the UFPA's Language Laboratory can offer for English learning, and a smaller number of participants (4) do not know the benefits of the space.

Chart 3- Students' awareness about the benefits of the laboratory

Você tem ciência dos benefícios que o laboratório de linguagem pode oferecer durante seu processo de aprendizagem?

14 respostas



Source: Designed by the author, 2023.

In this way, from the data collected, it is possible to observe that a significant part of the students claim to know the resources available in the Language Laboratory of the Universidade Federal do Pará (UFPA). However, it is important to point out that this theoretical knowledge does not guarantee an efficient domain of the resources made available by the space, since the fact of knowing the benefits theoretically does not imply in knowing how to effectively use the resources available in the Language Laboratory, since it is necessary that students understand how these resources can be adequately used to maximize their learning in the English language.

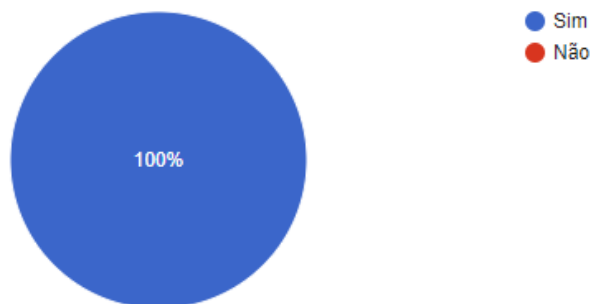
In this sense, the tutoring of a teacher or responsible monitor is essential, as Martin (2012, pg.06) states that some orientations should be done by a human being, since the space equipped with machines does not replace this kind of monitoring. In this way, students will be able to take full advantage of the technologies available in the Language Laboratory and improve their English language skills in a significant way.

In this context, through the questioning presented in the chart 4 below, it was concluded that the non-use of the space by the students mentioned above is not linked to the lack of adequacy of the space for language learning, since all the research participants (14) attested that the laboratory space is adequate for teaching and learning English.

Chart 4- Students' view about the space provided at the laboratory

Você acredita que o espaço do laboratório de linguagem é adequado e confortável para realizar atividades de aprendizagem do inglês?

14 respostas



Source: Designed by the author, 2023.

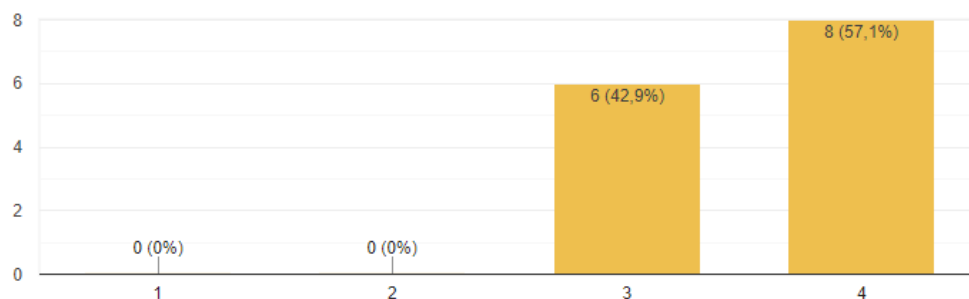
In relation to the quality of the equipment present in the space, from the x-graph it is possible to visualize that the students evaluated as "good" (6) or "excellent" (8) the technological resources available in the space, thus recognizing the potential of this environment to improve their language skills and also that the students' positive evaluation validates the quality of the space, indicating that it is equipped with modern and effective technological resources that meet the students' needs. Thus, it is possible to affirm that the space in question is an environment conducive to language learning and that it conforms to the quality patterns expected by the students.

However, it is important to point out that recognizing the space as adequate for language learning does not guarantee that the student will acquire the linguistic aspects instantly. As discussed by Kloss (----), it is necessary for the student to be conscious of his linguistic goals in order to recognize which resources available in the laboratory can be used to achieve those goals. This implies that the effective use of the resources available in the space depends on the student's awareness of his own goals and ability to select and employ appropriately the resources that best suit his linguistic needs.

Chart 5- Classification of the laboratory's resources

Em uma escala de 1 a 4, como você classifica os recursos tecnológicos disponíveis no laboratório de linguagem ?

14 respostas



Source: Designed by the author, 2023.

About the other results of the research, it is possible to notice that the relationship between the professors and the students in relation to the incentive to use the Language Laboratory at UFPA is mixed. While 8 students claimed to receive encouragement, another 6 stated that they did not receive this kind of support, becoming a possible reason for the underutilization of the space.

Consequently, this suggests that there is a need for more engagement by the professors to encourage the use of this space by students, as this encouragement can be crucial for students to perform better in relation to English language learning, since the teacher plays the role of facilitator of learning, and is also recognized as a monitor and guide of student learning (LITTLE, 2003, HUEW [20--])

The engagement of the teaching staff in this context is fundamental to awaken the students' interest and encourage their active participation in the use of the space. With the appropriate orientation and support, students can perform better in their English language learning, exploring the technological resources available in the language laboratory in a broader and more profitable way.

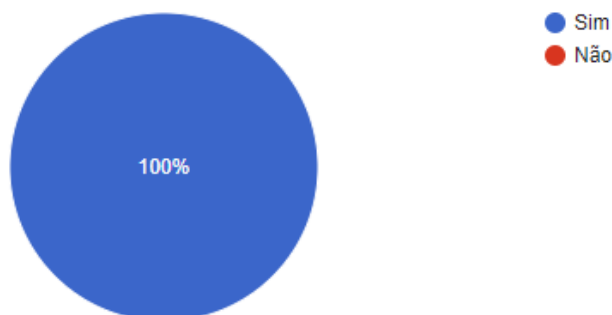
On the other hand, it is interesting to note in chart 6 that, despite this difference in relation to encouragement, all students (14) agreed that the experience of learning English in the Language Laboratory became more effective and dynamic. This indicates that, despite some barriers regarding the use of the space, such as the lack of incentive from the professors team, the questionable knowledge of the students about the available resources, the Language Lab is very useful for learning the English language, since it was evidenced that the use of a modern environment equipped with the latest technology, which enables interactive and communicative practices, can significantly contribute to the improvement of the language proficiency and, consequently, to the academic and professional success of the students.

In this way, it is possible to conclude that the Language Laboratory is a relevant space for language teaching and that, even with some limitations, it has the potential to promote positive and effective learning experiences.

Chart 6- Students' Perceptions of their learning

Ao utilizar o lab. linguagem para fins educacionais, você percebeu que a sua experiência de aprendizagem do inglês tornou-se mais efetiva e dinâmica ?

14 respostas



Source: Designed by the author, 2023.

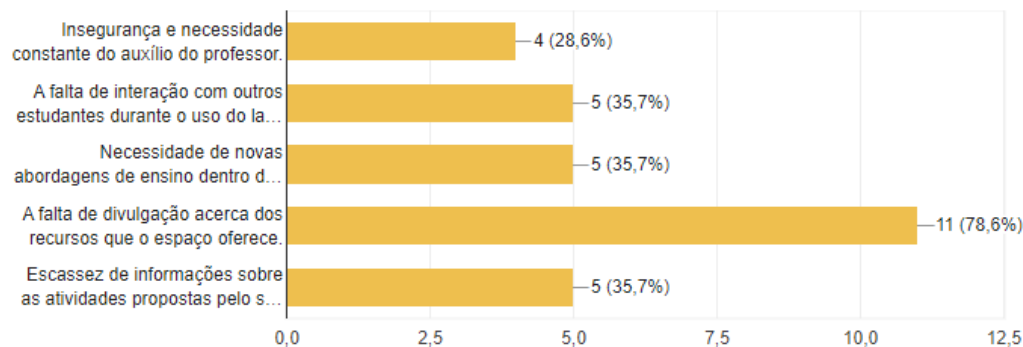
Regarding these limitations that cause the underutilization, there are other reasons that may lead to the space not being used or not being used to its full potential besides the reasons already mentioned, such as the lack of incentive by the professors and the questionable knowledge of the students about the available resources.

To help the participants to indicate the factors that may lead to the underutilization of the spaces, some reasons were attributed as options for the participants to choose, in this sense, it is important to emphasize that these reasons were provided according to what is present in the literature review about the theme, which showed the following possible reasons presented in the chart 7 below:

Chart 7- Students' perceptions of the subutilization of the Laboratory

Dentre as opções abaixo, marque a qual/quais, na sua opinião, seja um fator que contribui para a subutilização(ou seja, mau aproveitamento)do laboratório de linguagem:

14 respostas



Source: Designed by the author, 2023.

Based on the data presented, we can conclude that the lack of information about the resources available in the language laboratory was indicated by most students (11 votes) as the main reason for underutilization of the space. This conclusion is consistent, as it suggests that students may not be receiving enough information about the space and the learning options it offers, which may limit their ability to use it more efficiently and creatively.

Furthermore, according to the data presented, it is possible to observe that three options received the same number of votes (5 each): the lack of interaction with other students during the use of the language laboratory, the need for new teaching approaches within the environment, and the lack of information about the activities proposed by the SANAKO software. These options point to possible difficulties faced by students in engaging with and taking advantage of the space more effectively.

These difficulties may be related to the lack of adequate support, appropriate pedagogical stimulation, or precise information about what it is possible to accomplish in the language laboratory, since the previous graphics show a parameter of these same factors linked to the answers of the participating students.

Finally, 4 students voted that insecurity and the constant need for teacher assistance are factors that lead to the underutilization of the space. By analyzing these results, it is possible to observe that insecurity and the constant need for teacher assistance were identified as factors that may be limiting the autonomous and creative use of the space by the students, thus, this result points out that some students may not be confident in their abilities or do not feel prepared to use the laboratory without the teacher's guidance, which can be an obstacle to a wider exploration of the environment and its technological resources.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this research, we examined the importance of the language lab as a valuable resource for English learners. It became evident that this environment performs a fundamental role in the development of students' language and communication skills, providing a number of significant benefits. Therefore, we conclude that the language laboratory provides students with intensive language practice, as they have the opportunity to engage in interactive activities, such as simulated conversations, pairs and discussion groups, pronunciation exercises, listening to authentic materials, writing practice and others. This immersion in the use of the English language contributes to the consolidation of knowledge and to the development of fluency and confidence in communication.

In addition, the space offers the students a safe, comfortable and inviting environment through material and technological resources that facilitate their studies, such as computers with Internet access, the presence of Sanako Software, comfortable tables and chairs, lockers to keep their personal objects, headsets, and others. In this way, students feel more secure and motivated to continue their studies when compared to the traditional classroom. Thus, through technological resources, students have access to different accents, idioms, vocabularies, authentic materials and grammatical structures, allowing them to practice the language independently, according to their specific needs and interests.

Furthermore, it was also observed that the language laboratory is a supportive environment for interaction among students, where they can practice conversational skills and work on collaborative activities. This social interaction promotes motivation, mutual support, and the sharing of ideas, helping students to feel more comfortable and confident when communicating in English. In summary, the language laboratory performs an essential role in the English learning process by providing students with an environment of intensive practice, authentic exposure to the language, individualized feedback, and access to learning resources and tools. It promotes interaction, collaboration and the development of language and technology skills, preparing students to communicate effectively in English in a variety of real-life situations.

However, the importance of the monitor in the English classes in the language lab must be highlighted, since it plays a significant role and brings considerable benefits to the students who choose to study in this place. The presence of a tutor is essential, as he provides

guidance, individualized support, monitoring and feedback, individualization of learning, and promotes a collaborative learning environment. The interaction between the monitor and the students enhances the learning experience and contributes to more effective progress in English language acquisition.

Finally, it can be concluded that in view of the benefits mentioned, it is evident that the language laboratory plays a fundamental role in the English learning process. However, for the learner to achieve his study goals, he must be able to assume an active and responsible role in his own learning process, defining personal goals and planning his study journey. Furthermore, it was clear that autonomy in English learning allows learners to have the freedom to initiate interactions, pursue opportunities for oral and written practice, and apply language skills in real-life situations, as this encourages active use of the English language and the development of communicative skills.

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