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# Celt

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# Celt

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# STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES ON THE ROLE OF OPEN ACCESS CENTRE AND LANGUAGE LABORATORY AS SUPPORTING UNITS IN DEVELOPING ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS

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**Abstract :** This study aims at revealing the perception of the 2010, 2011 and 2012 academic year students of the Faculty of Letters on two supporting units at the faculty, namely Open Access Centre (OAC) and Language Laboratory (LL) in enhancing their English Language Skills. The results show that the average students consider both OAC and LL useful in developing their English Language competence. On the whole, they are satisfied with the existence of these two media except for a few things which need improving, such as facilities and instruments.

**Key words:** perception, OAC, LL

***Abstrak:** Penelitian ini bertujuan mengungkapkan persepsi mahasiswa Fakultas Sastra angkatan 2010, 2011, dan 2012 terhadap 2 unit penunjang yang ada di Fakultas Sastra yaitu Open Access Centre (OAC) dan Language Laboratory (LL) dalam membantu meningkatkan kemampuan berbahasa Inggris mereka. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa rata-rata mahasiswa menganggap OAC maupun LL sebagai media yang membantu perkembangan kecakapan bahasa Inggris mereka. Secara umum mereka juga puas dengan keberadaan dua unit penunjang ini. Namun ada juga hal-hal yang menurut mereka perlu diperbaiki, misalnya fasilitas dan peralatan yang ada.*

***Kata kunci:** persepsi, OAC, LL*

## INTRODUCTION

The advancement of technology has a great impact on the education realm including language learning. A wide variety of modern tools are used as supporting elements in the teaching learning process of a language. Language Lab, CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning), SALL (Self Access Language Learning) are some instances of this (Benson, 2001). He further says "In principal self access, self instruction, and distance learning foster autonomy by providing learners with opportunities to direct their own learning"

It is obvious that there is a strong connection between the use of the afore-mentioned modern tools with autonomous learning which is defined as a mode of learning which requires the learners to study independently of direct contact with teachers (Littlejohn, 1997). In the past two decades, it has been noted that there is a tendency of self instruction and distance learning in language learning. Such a style automatically relies on technology-based approaches.

Being a language school, in this case an English department, the Faculty of Letters, Soegijapranata Catholic University employed modern facilities such as language lab and SALL. The use of such facilities has two-folded purposes. Firstly, they are meant for improving the students' skills in learning English. Secondly, they serve as assisting tools in self language learning or the so-called autonomous language learning. Keeping the above issues in mind, the research questions were formulated as follows:

1. What are Language Lab and OAC (Open Access Center) used at the Faculty of Letters Unika Soegijapranata?
2. What are the students' perception on the use of these two facilities (LL and OAC) in developing their English Language Skill?

## LITERARY REVIEW

### A. Independent Learning

Independent learning or is also often called autonomous learning has undergone an explosion of interest since two decades ago. In an attempt to encourage out of class learning, many language institutions have established

language resource centres where learners are encouraged to work independently. Such centres are known to be Self Access Language Learning (SALL). Following Cotterall and Reinders (1995), SALL can be defined as:

A place consisting of a number of resources (in the form of materials, activities, and support) which is designed to accommodate learners of different levels, styles, goals and interests. It aims to develop learner autonomy among its users.

Still according to them, Self Access Language Learning is the learning that takes place in a Self Access Centre.

SALL has the potential to promote learner autonomy in a number of ways. Firstly, it provides facilities which allow learners to pursue their own goals and interests while accommodating individual differences in learning style, level and pace of learning. Secondly, the resources have the potential to raise learners' awareness of the learning process by highlighting aspects of the management of learning, such as goal setting and monitoring progress. Thirdly, SALL can act as a bridge between the teacher - directed learning situation, where the language is studied and practised, and the real world, where the target language is used as a means of communication. Finally, SALL can promote the learning autonomy of learners who prefer or obliged to learn without a teacher, by supporting their learning in the absence of an organised language course ( Gardner and Miller, 1999).

Many previous studies of SALL have investigated different types of learner preparation and support (Esch,1994), material design and evaluation(Gardner and Miller,1994), methods of monitoring learner progress ( Martyn,1994), the role of technology (Morrison,1996) etcetera but so far no study on the perception of learners at a certain place on the role of SALL has been conducted. Thus, it will certainly be interesting as well as beneficial to investigate such a topic.

## **B. Perception**

Following Crystal (1992), perception or attitudes are the feelings people have about their own language variety or the language varieties of others. It is believed that perception influences language learning in a number of ways.

Stern (1983) has investigated a number of different kinds of perception that are considered relevant to second language learning. He classifies these kinds of perception into three types:

1. Perception towards the community and people who speak the same language.
2. Perception towards learning the language concerned.
3. Perception towards languages and language learning in general.

Perception is a central part of human individuality, it may encompass effective, behavioural and cognitive responses. Perception can be said as a final thought of someone about something

### **C. Language Skills**

It is a universal concept that the study of language consists of four basic skills. They are listening, speaking, reading and writing skills (Harmer, 2001). Listening should be the first skill introduced to the students as in listening class students are exposed to the spoken target language before they are expected to be able to produce or speak the language. The second skill that should be taught to the student is speaking. As a matter of fact, listening and speaking are inseparable skills as in real communication it is those skills that are mostly involved. Reading and writing skills come after the previous two skills. Harmer further states that there are four things that students need to do with the target language. They are: be exposed to it, understand its meaning, understand its form, and practices it.

## **METHODS**

The type of this research is descriptive as it aims at revealing the perception of a certain group of students on the existence of two supporting units provided by the Faculty of Letters. They are Open Access Centre (OAC) and Language Laboratory (LL). The quantitative analysis is used to find out to what extent the respondents consider both of them useful and whether or not they are helpful in developing their English skills

## **A. Respondents**

The respondents in this research were 2010,2011 and 2012 Students of The Faculty of Letters, Soegijapranata Catholic University. There were 86 students who became the respondents of this study. They consisted of:

1. 20 students from 2010 academic year
2. 24 students from 2011 academic year
3. 42 students from 2012 academic year

The method used by the researcher in selecting the respondents is that of sample equals to population (Vredenberg, 1984) as all students of the above academic year were involved as research participants.

## **B. Research Instruments**

The research instruments used in this study are as follows:

### **(1) Questionnaire**

Questionnaire is research instrument consisting of a list of written questions about a particular problem (Vredenberg,1984). There are 2 kinds of questionnaire. They are the closed- ended and the open-ended types. The open-ended type gives a chance to the respondents to answer the questions based on their own situations while the closed-ended type consists of questions whose answers are already provided, so that the respondents should only choose the answers from the list. The choice of questions, is usually arranged, based on the Likert-Scale.

Before the questionnaire is administered, a piloting stage is conducted. It is a kind of try out in which a number of students are asked to fill it out for the purpose of finding out some unclarity about it. The questionnaire is then corrected and improved before being administered to the real respondents.

### **(2) Interviews**

Vredenberg (1984) defines an interview as an interaction and communication process to find out something about life and human behaviour. In this process, several variables play a very important role as they

might influence or even determine the results of the interviews. Such variables are as follows:

- a. The interviewer
- b. The respondents
- c. The list of questions or the interview guide being used.
- d. The rapporteur of the interviewer and the interviewee

In this research, the interviews were made with 15 students who represented students of the three academic years, 2010,2011, and 2012. The results of the interviews were then used to cross check the results of the questionnaire as well as to complete the data obtained from it.

## **DATA ANALYSIS METHOD**

The method of data analysis used in this research is quantitative method,i.e. Descriptive Statistics which was employed to synthesize the observed condition and modified it into some information. In this study, the data obtained from the questionnaire were analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science )and then the results were presented in tables. They were inthe form of Mean, Standard Deviation, Minimum and Maximum scores. To cross check and complete the data obtained from the questionnaire, the researcher made use of the results of the interviews.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **A. Data Collection**

As has been mentioned previously, the data collection method in this research covers the following:

1. Administration of questionnaire
2. Interviews

The research participants were Faculty of Letters students from 3 academic years. They were 2010,2011, and 2012. There were 20 respondents from 2010, 24 respondents from 2011 and 42 respondents from 2012. Therefore, in total there were 86 respondents for the questionnaire.

## B. Questionnaire

The questionnaire for both OAC and LL were designed in order to find out the students' perception on those 2 supporting units. It consists of 26 questions formulated based on the theory of interest or perception discussed earlier in this article.

## C. Interviews

The interviews were made with 15 students from the 3 different academic years. In those interviews, 16 guided questions were asked to the students and the results were used to crosscheck the results of the questionnaires and complete the obtained data. The interviews were done in an informal and relaxing way, so as to put the interviewees at ease. In such atmosphere, they were expected to answer the questions the best they could.

## D. Questionnaire Results

The following is the presentation of the questionnaire results followed by the interpretation of each.

Table 1:  
Questionnaire Results

No	Information	Min.	Max.	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	General Perception on OAC and LL	2,00	5,00	3,5581	,71298
2	The Importance of OAC and LL in Developing Students'English Skill	2,00	5,00	3,9302	,71605
3	The Importance of OAC and LL in Developing Students'English Knowledge	2,00	5,00	3,6977	,72062

From the first item above, it can be concluded that in general the respondents have positive perception on OAC and Language Laboratory. It is proven by the mean score 3,5581. The minimum score is 2 which means that some respondents state both media are not helpful enough. However, the maximum score is 5 meaning some respondents agree that both media are very useful. Since the standard deviation is below 1,00, it can also be

interpreted that their answers do not vary greatly. As can be seen from the second item, both media are regarded important in developing students' English skills. It is based on the mean score of 3,9302 for this variable. On one side, the maximum score 5 means that both of them are very important in developing students' English language skills. On the other side, the minimum score 2 means that they are not important. Nonetheless, the standard deviation is 0,71605. So, this suggests that the dispersion among the answers is not large. The importance of both media in developing students' English knowledge is reflected through the mean score 3,6977 for the third variable. The minimum score 2 shows that there are some students who disagree on the importance of both media in developing their English knowledge. The maximum score 5, however, shows that other students agree upon the importance of both media in developing their English knowledge. The standard deviation below 1 indicates that there is not much variation among the answers of the respondents.

Table 2:  
Questionnaire Results (continued)

No	Information	Min.	Max.	Mean	Standard Deviation
4	Perception on OAC and LL's Facilities	1,00	5,00	3,4884	,79327
5	Satisfaction with OAC and LL's Facilities	2,00	5,00	3,3837	,78469
6	OAC and LL's Facilities Used by Students	2,00	5,00	3,2558	,75438

The fourth variable in the table above indicates that the students generally have good perception on OAC and LL as shown by the mean score 3,4884. The minimum score 1, however, shows that some students have unfavourable perception on OAC and LL's facilities. Nevertheless, the standard deviation is below 1 meaning the students' answers do not vary greatly. The fifth variable in the table above implies that students on the average are satisfied with the facilities in both media. Meanwhile, the

maximum score 5 shows that there are some students who are already satisfied with the facilities in both media. The standard deviation is 0,78469 indicating a small dispersion of answers. A further investigation in students frequency in using facilities in both media show that they very often use them as indicated by the maximum score 5 regardless of the fact that some seldom use them as shown by the minimum score 2. The standard deviation is 0,75438 showing a small variety of answers.

Table 3:  
Questionnaire Results (continued)

No	Information	Min.	Max.	Mean	Standard Deviation
7	Opinion about OAC and LL as A Place to Improve Listening Skill	1,00	5,00	3,7674	,79223
8	Perception on OAC and LL's Comfortability	2,00	5,00	3,6977	,72062
9	Opinion about OAC and LL as Place to Practise Listening	1,00	5,00	2,5116	1,05990
10	Students' Purposes in Visiting OAC and LL	2,00	5,00	4,0116	,83306
11	Opinion about LL Used not Only for Listening Classes	2,00	5,00	3,8140	,80457
12	Opinion about The Need of Schedule for Students' to Practise Listening	1,00	5,00	3,8488	,83338
13	Opinion about The Needs of Materials Provided for Students' to Practise at LL	1,00	5,00	3,7209	,80661

14	Satisfaction with Services at OAC and LL	1,00	5,00	3,4070	,75736
15	Opinion about the Helpfulness of the People in Charge of OAC and LL	1,00	5,00	3,5116	,66411
16	Opinion about the Well Informedness of the People in Charge of OAC and LL	1,00	5,00	3,4070	,65759
17	Opinion about the Availability of OAC and LL's Materials	1,00	5,00	3,3721	,63332
18	Opinion about the Relevance of OAC and LL's Materials with Their Needs	1,00	5,00	3,4302	,69521
19	Opinion about the Comfortability of OAC and LL' Rooms	1,00	5,00	3,5814	,74305
20	Opinion about the Sophisticatedness of Equipment in OAC and LL	2,00	5,00	3,1860	,64190
21	Opinion about the Equipment in OAC and LL in General	2,00	5,00	3,2442	,71843
22	Preferences to Spend Time at OAC and LL	1,00	5,00	2,8488	,84738
23	Preferences to Use Equipment at OAC and LL	1,00	5,00	3,3023	,76803

Referring to the above results, it can be interpreted that students agree both media being researched are proper places to improve their English language skills. The mean score 3,7674 serve as evidence in this case. Eventhough there is a big discrepancy between the minimum and maximum scores, namely 1 and 5, the standard deviation is below 1 meaning there is not a great variety of answers. Students also seem to have good perception about OAC and Language Lab's comfortability. This can be seen by the mean score 3,6977. However, the minimum score 2 means that there are students who have unfavourable perception on the comfortability of both media. Yet, the maximum score for this variable is 5, which means some other students have very good perception on the comfortability of both. The standard deviation 0,72062 shows that the dispersion among the answers is not large. The result of the questionnaire also shows that students do not quite agree with the statement saying OAC and LL are good places to practise listening. This is based on the mean score 2,5116 out of the maximum score 5. The minimum score is 1 which means that some students disagree that both media are good places to practise listening. However, the maximum score is 5. It means there are students who agree that both OAC and LL are very good places to practise listening. However, the standard deviation for this particular variable is above 1 meaning that the students' answers have a large dispersion.

Based on variable 10, there is an indication that students sometimes visit OAC and LL for purposes other than learning. We can conclude it from the mean score 4,0116. The minimum score is 2 meaning there are students who visit these places for other purposes, while the maximum score is 5 which means there are students who visit both media for learning purposes only. For this item, the standard deviation is 0,83306 meaning the students' answers do not vary much.

As can be seen from variable 11 above, students agree with the opinion that LL should be used not only for listening class. This is because the mean score is 3,8140. The minimum score is 2. It means there are students who disagree with the notion that Language Lab should be used only for listening classes. However, the maximum score is 5 meaning there are other students who agree that language lab should not only be used for listening classes. The standard deviation is 80457 meaning there is not much variation on the answers.

From variable 12 above, it can be concluded that students agree the schedule for them to practise listening has to be provided. It is shown by

the score of the mean 3,8488. The minimum score 1 means that there are students who think the schedule for them to practise listening is not necessary. However, the maximum score is 5 meaning there are other students who think that it is essential to have a schedule for them to practise listening. The standard deviation is 0,83338 meaning there is not much variation in the students' answers.

The next variable in the above list indicates students' agreement to the supply of materials for them to practise at Language Lab. This is shown by the mean score of this variable which is 3,7209. The minimum score is 1 meaning there are students who think that they do not have to be provided with materials. On the other side, the maximum score is 5 meaning there are students who think that materials must be provided for students to practise at language lab. The standard deviation below 1, means that the answers do not vary much.

Variable 14 shows that students are generally satisfied with the service at both OAC and LL. This can be seen through the mean score 3,4070 out of the maximum 5. The minimum score 1 means that there are students who are not satisfied with the services at both places. However, the maximum score 5 means that other students are satisfied with the services there. The standard deviation 0,75736 means that the students' answers do not vary much.

From the data above, the students feel that the people in charge of both OAC and LL are generally helpful. The mean score 3,5116 is the proof. However, the minimum score is 1 which means that some students think the people in charge of both places are not helpful. The maximum score 5 shows that there are students who think that they are helpful. The standard deviation 0,66411 means the students' answers do not vary greatly.

Further result in the table above shows that the respondents feel the people in charge of OAC and LL are well informed enough. It is shown by the score of the mean 3,4070. The minimum score 1, however, means there are students who think the people in charge of LL and OAC are not well informed. However, the maximum score 5 means there are students who think they are very well informed. The standard deviation 0,65759 means that there is a small dispersion among students' answers.

Variable 17 above proves that the respondents have a positive perception about the availability of OAC and LL's materials. It is proven by

the mean score 3,3721. The minimum score is 1 which means that students think negatively about the availability of language lab materials. The maximum score is 5 meaning some other students think positively about the availability of materials in both media. The standard deviation below 1 means there is not much variation in the students' answers.

Variable 18 describes the respondents' opinion about whether or not the materials in both OAC and LL are relevant enough with their needs. Based on the respondents' answers, the materials have been relevant enough as the mean score is 3,4302. There are respondents that feel the materials in both media have already been relevant. It is shown by the maximum score 5. Nevertheless, the minimum score is 1. It means other respondents think that the materials in Language Lab are not relevant with what they need. The standard deviation is below 1 meaning that the variation among the answers is not much.

The above result also indicates that in general the respondents feel comfortable with both OAC and Language Lab rooms. It is proven by this the average score of 3,5814. There are respondents who feel very comfortable with the 2 rooms as shown by the maximum score 5. However, the minimum score 1 means that there are respondents who do not feel comfortable at all with both media's rooms. The low standard deviation means that the dispersion among the answers is small.

From variable 20, it can be concluded that in general the respondents feel that the equipment in both OAC and LL are sophisticated. This can be seen by the mean score 3,1860 out of 5. The maximum and minimum scores respectively are 5 and 2. The respondents' answers do not vary much as the standard deviation is far below 1.

Based on table 21 above, it can be interpreted that the respondents generally have good opinions about the equipment in both OAC and LL as the mean score is 3,2442. The minimum score is 2 which means that there are respondents who think that the equipment in both media in general are bad, while the maximum score is 5 meaning that other respondents think the equipment in both places in general are very good. The score of the standard deviation that is below 1 shows that there is only a little variation of the respondents' answers.

From variable 22 above, it can be seen that the respondents prefer not to spend the time at both OAC and LL frequently. This is shown by the

mean score 2,8488 out of 5. The minimum score is 1 which reflects that some respondents do not often want to spend their time at both places. However, some other respondents are the opposite. They really want to spend their time there a lot. This is shown by the maximum score 5. The standard deviation that is below 1 shows that the answers of the respondents do not vary greatly.

This next variable depicts that the respondents prefer to use the equipment at Language Lab. It is shown by the mean score 3,3023 of the maximum 5. The minimum score 1 means some respondents prefer not to use equipment at language lab. We can see that the maximum score 5 means some other respondents prefer to use equipment at Language Lab. The answers of the respondents do not vary a lot. It can be seen from the standard deviation which is below 1, namely 0,76803.

Table 4:  
 Questionnaire Results (continued)

No	Information	Min.	Max.	Mean	Standard Deviation
24	The Needs of OAC and LL to Improve Its Facilities	2,00	5,00	4,0000	,84017
25	The Needs of OAC and LL to Improve Its Services	2,00	5,00	3,9419	,80227
26	The Needs of OAC and LL to Improve Its Materials	2,00	5,00	3,9651	,83240

The respondents feel that there is a very high need of both OAC and LL to improve their facilities. It can be seen from the means score 4,0000. The minimum score 2 means some respondents do not perceive that it is necessary for both media to improve their facilities. However, other respondents deem that it is crucial for both of them to improve their facilities. This is shown by the maximum score 5. The standard deviation that is below 1 means that the answers of the respondents do not vary

greatly. It can also be concluded that both media need to improve their services. It is proven by the mean score 3,9419. The minimum score is 2 meaning some respondents do not think that the services at both places need to be improved. Meanwhile, the maximum score 5 means some other respondents believe that their services need improving. The standard deviation 0,80227 indicates that the dispersion among the respondents' answers is small.

The last variable in the table above indicates that the respondents on the average feel the need of both media to improve their materials. It can be seen from the mean score 3,9651 out of the maximum 5. From the minimum score 2, it can be concluded that there are some respondents that feel the materials in both places do not need to be improved. However, the maximum score 5 means that there are some other respondents who want the material there to be improved. The score of the standard deviation that is below 1,00 shows that the answers of the respondents do not vary greatly.

## **E. Interview Results**

The results of the interview on OAC show that 2010 and 2011 students frequently go to OAC between and after classes. They usually go there to do their assignments and to find information related to their lessons or assignments. They find that OAC is very useful for them and most of them are satisfied with the existence of OAC. They are also happy with the OAC assistant whom they find helpful. However, they suggest that OAC needs to be expanded, so that there will be more room for them. They also complain about the old carpets that need changing, the computers that do not work well and the collection of books especially novels that need updating.

The 2012 students seem to be unfamiliar or reluctant to make use of the OAC facilities partly because they do not know what is in it, how useful it is for them and why they should spend their time there.

As for LL, the average students express their favourable perception in relation to the usefulness of LL in developing their listening skill. They also appreciate the facilities, equipment, materials and services at LL. Some suggestions that they make concern with the broken headsets, too warm air conditioners and some of the squeaking chairs.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the above findings, the following conclusion can be drawn that in general, students consider OAC a useful place for them to do assignments, find information related to their study, do other purposes and even to kill the time. Surprisingly, they do not really think that OAC is a good place for them to practise their English. Yet, they find OAC an appropriate place to develop their English knowledge. Students on the average also claim OAC's materials to be relevant to their needs, Regardless of the fact that they are satisfied with the existence of OAC in general, they think OAC still needs to improve its facilities, materials, equipment and services.

In comparison with OAC, LL seems to be considered far useful in terms of developing students' English skill particularly listening. Students tend to agree that the facilities, equipment, materials and services provided at LL are relevant to their needs. They even feel the needs of LL not only as a medium for their listening classes but also as a place for them to practise their listening skill. Therefore, they suggest that there should be a free time for them to have an individual practice outside listening classes. They also suggest that there should be separate, guided materials provided for them in their individual practices.

With regard to the students' comments on OAC, a few things need to be done. They are among others:

- a. The use and function of OAC needs to be socialized to students particularly first year students.
- b. More tasks or assignments given to the students need to involve the use of OAC.
- c. OAC needs to be enlarged and better facilitated in terms of equipment, materials, and services.

For LL as a supporting unit at the Faculty of Letters, there are a few things that should be done in order to improve its function and use. They are as follows :

- a. Students should be given extra time to practise their listening skill at LL.
- b. There should be a tutor to supervise students while doing their extra listening practices.
- c. Some guided, extra materials should be provided for students in their free practices.

- d. Some facilities and equipment at LL, such as headsets, Air Conditioners and chairs should be fixed or even renewed.

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