What is a language lab and what learning benefits does it bring?

Many of you may have already used a language lab as a student or perhaps as a teacher however you will see that the language lab has changed for the better. The opportunities and learning potential that a new Sanako language lab can offer is vast however you may be pleased to hear that some things stay the same. The basic aims of the language lab are the same as they ever were and they are:

- **To improve listening** skills – classroom and individual with high quality audio
- **To improve speaking** skills – individual, paired, groups
- **To present and demonstrate language skills** – both screen and voice in seconds
- **To monitor and guide students** – discrete monitoring and intervention as required

Empirical evidence from users over many years has shown that language labs help to;

- Increase the number of students taking languages
- Attract more boys to study languages
- Significantly improve the Speaking Test results obtained
- Encourage peer-assessment and parental involvement

Language labs have been around a long time and of course the technology has changed – from reel to reel, cassette, sound cards, PCs and now online.

But the principles remain constant but with new and exciting possibilities!

The main basis of the language lab has been two-track recording and this has not changed but it has been improved – the next page explains how things have stayed the same whilst moved on at the same time.
Language laboratories for a new generation

Remember these!?

The tape area was divided into two tracks

In exactly the same way as the cassette above
the Study student has two tracks.

Program Track
Student Track

When the software plays an audio file, you are able to hear both tracks at the point where the green triangles pass – just like a cassette.

This method of being able to listen to and record two tracks has been the fundamental basis for all language labs to date and is known as Audio Active Comparative (AAC) recording.

This meant that the source material (usually cassettes) left blanks or gaps of silence where students were able to record their answers. This was fine for exercises such as listen and repeat but for question and answer exercises the simple question was “how long a gap should I leave?”. If you ask a simple question such as “What did you do on your holiday?” then how long do you leave for students to record an answer? This is where the new Voice Insert mode in Study provides the answer. You still have two tracks, but the student can insert their recordings into the original program track for as long or short as they wish.

This methodology has been proved to be beneficial when preparing students for their Speaking Tests – just record the questions and allow your students to be as creative as they can be with their answers! It’s still basic two track recording but with a new and exciting twist.