

Students' Perspective on Foreign Language Self-access Centers in China: A Case Study

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Foreign language self-access centers (SACs) can foster learner autonomy and enhance language teaching and learning. However, how such a center actually benefits students is less reported. This paper examines an SAC in a large university in Wuhan, China, from the perspective of students. Specifically, it investigates what the students do in the center; what users think they benefit most from; what resources they think help most; what suggestions they think may improve the center; and what students perceive is the relation between SACs and learner autonomy. The study reveals that there is a gap in students' perception of the role of SACs in their language learning, between what they actually do and what they can do. Learners have realized the importance of learner autonomy in language learning, but they lack self-confidence in being autonomous learners. Their conceptualization of learner autonomy is shallow, and many equate it with self-instruction. Results show that the center's lack of individualized guidance prevents students from making full use of it. Several other reasons are reported from the perspectives of users. Possible solutions are suggested. This study adds to the understanding of SACs from the users' perspective and provides feedback to improve foreign language SACs.