

SUCCESS IN LEARNING ENGLISH: THE STUDENTS' DEFINITION

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Abstract

Individual learner differences and success in learning English are not new topics. Many researches were conducted to find out the personal characteristics of learner that make one learner more successful than another. Defining success is a difficult, but every student has their own definition of what success in learning English is. Inspired by Mardiah (2015) research about success in second language learning, this paper is aimed in describing the definition of success in learning English from students' point of view and their arguments behind it. The respondent of this research is Public Health students of STIK Bina Husada Palembang who took English subject. The definitions are classified into three categories; know the basic rule of the language, speak fluently like native speaker, and use the language to communicate. The definition and its argument reflect the students' goal in learning English.

Keywords: Success, Learning, English

1. Introduction

Second language (L2) learners vary on a number of dimensions to do with personality, motivation, learning style, aptitude and age. There are two basic possibilities regarding which aspect of SLA is affected by individual learner factors. One is that differences in age, learning style, aptitude, motivation, and personality result in differences in the route along which learners pass in SLA. The other is that these factors only the rate and ultimate success of SLA.

In the study on predicting student success with the Learning and Study Strategies Inventory (LASSI), Hedricks (1997) discovered that motivation and attitude were the best predictors of student academic achievement. Attitude has close relationship with motivation. Brown (2007) states that second language learners

benefit from positive attitude and that negative attitude may lead to decreased motivation. The students who have positive attitude toward English and its culture are expected to be able to master English better than the students who have negative attitude toward English, because they will have stronger motivation to learn a language, while students who have negative attitude toward a language will do the opposite. The students who like to study English will study harder than students who do not like to study English; hence, attitude becomes important factor in language learning. For this reason, the learners should build good attitude in the teaching and learning process; the positive attitude toward English will help the students themselves in mastering it well, and if the students have negative attitude toward English, they will be indifferent toward English.

While in Alsayed study (2003) determining successful language learners was done on basis of the subjects' IELTS scores. So, is having the highest score in TOEFL or IELTS the descriptor of a successful language learner? Clear definition of success in learning English is needed, not to measure the learners' characteristics but to help us understand learner differences in learning. Whose definition of success? The definition that comes from the students themselves.

2. Theoretical Background

Gardner (2006) insists that students' attitude towards the target language group will affect their success in learning that language. A student, who does not like the native speakers of English or views his/her own culture superior to the English speaking culture, can walk into a foreign language classroom and quickly generalize his dislikes; he or she will dislike school, teacher, book, homework, etc. Students can have either negative or positive attitudes towards learning English. If their attitudes are positive, they will show an interest in learning English. On the other hand, if their attitudes are negative, they will dislike learning English or even feel reluctant to learn it. Thus, it can be argued that attitudes towards learning a language may influence performance in the language.

Learning will be facilitated if the student holds positive attitudes towards what he learns including the language and this, in turn, will affect the student's performance in that language.

The good language learner

There have been a number of attempts to specify the qualities of the 'good language learner'. Ortega (2013) stated the good language learner will:

1. Be able to respond to the group dynamics of the learning situation so as not to develop negative anxiety and inhibitions;
2. Seek out all opportunities to use the target language;
3. Make maximum use of the opportunities afforded to practice listening to and responding to speech in the L2 addressed to him and to others-this will involve attending to meaning rather than to form;
4. Supplement the learning that derives from direct contact with speakers of the L2 with learning derives from the use of study techniques (such as making vocabulary lists)-this is likely to involve attention to form;
5. Be an adolescent or an adult rather than a young child, at least as far as the early stages of grammatical development are concerned;
6. Possess sufficient analytic skills to perceive, categorize, and store the linguistics features of the L2, and also to monitor errors;
7. Possess a strong reason for learning the L2 (which may reflect an integrative or an instrumental motivation) and also develop a strong 'task motivation' (i.e. respond positively to the learning tasks chosen or provided);
8. Be prepared to experiment by taking risks, even if this makes the learner appear foolish;
9. Be capable of adapting to different learning conditions.

3. Method

This is a descriptive qualitative research. The participant of this research were all fourth semester students of Public Health Science who took English subject in academic year 2015/2016 STIK Bina Husada Palembang. They were all 32 participants.

What is the definition of success in learning English and what arguments base the definition are two questions being answered in this research. The data was obtained by asking the students to answer two open questions: Do you have your own definition about success in learning English? if yes, what is it and why do you define so?. They answered them in written form. These self-report data then are grouped into their categories.

4. Result and Discussion

From the written response, there are various definitions and arguments were obtained. In the following discussion, some answers from the students were quoted as it is. There were no editing process given to their content, structure or language. The data were grouped into three main definition; 1. Know the basic rule of the language, 2. Speak fluently like native speaker, and 3) use it to communicate. There are also exceptions in the data and is grouped into other responses.

Knowing the basic rule of the language

The first definition, knowing the basic rule of the language, was defined by one student. The emphasis is on knowing the basic rule of the language is given on grammatical rules and linguistics components. Such success is defined below

(1) Grammar is very important to know. Because when we want to talk in English, we must use the right grammar. If we use the wrong grammar, the meaning of our sentences will be wrong too. Grammar is the basic formula to

learn English. The example of grammar are like plural nouns, passive voice, question tags, personal pronoun, also too either, and etc. The first thing in success in learning English is when we can use the right grammar

- (2) Success in learning english is practice anything, like pasive or active english.*
- (3) If you just started learning English, you first need to know some basic rules of the language. Developing a solid foundation in English grammar will not only help you create your own sentences correctly but will also make it easier to improve your communication skills in both spoken and written English*

Speaking fluently like native speaker

Speaking fluently like native speaker is defined by one of the students, her definition was:

- (4) I am confident that my skills in terms of writing English sentences would be better. Also my ability to speak like native and understand conversations in English can be increase.*

Using English to Communicate

There were not all students stated that success in learning English means able to speak like native speaker and knowing the basic rule of the language. Most of them, can fulfill their needs of communication is success. For them, using English to communicate such as defined below:

Success in learning english for me if i can use this language to communication with foreign people and many places. For example, it is used in business, travelling, computer language, movie, and so on.

- (5) Success in learning English is , if the person is able to speak in the English language with verbal or transcription. Based on that definition success in learning English is the people able to understand , create and use words to communicate with others. Because if some one just able to used a language with oral or just write sentences it's just a part of mastering a language like*

active or passive language. So, if someone had succeed learn english he or she able to communicate to another people with active or passive language.

Others

Out of the above three groups of definition, there are students who stated their answer in different ways, like (7), (8), (9) below:

(6) Success in learning English, according to me is a learning experience that we think are necessary effort or struggle and sacrifice that truly, who could not come suddenly without sooth and sincerity.

(7) Yes, because in my opinion , success of learning English does not depend on the intelligence , but rather relies on the motivation and diligent effort , painstaking (diligently) continuous learning .

(8) success is the achievement of objectives in learning English and can apply it in life everyday.

5. Conclusion and Remark

Success is the accomplishment of an aim or purpose. So, when defining success in learning English, it means the accomplishment of the learning purpose itself.

Learning English involves the acquisition of the knowledge of English, this is a commonsense view of learning that has implications for how to teach, individual differences in defining success in learning English tell us to set the standards by ourselves. Why do we force the students to reach high standard when their definition of success in learning English only involve in simple communication in easy every day need? Why do we ask them to get 450 in TOEFL test when success is not laid based on their definition.

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