

Mohammed Khider University of Biskra
Faculty of Letters and Foreign Languages
Department of English Language



Course: Study skills

Level: First year LMD

Instructor: Dr. Chahira Nasri

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Characteristics of good language learners

Objectives of the Lesson: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Identify the significant features of the good learner.
- Determine the different characteristics of good language learners.

Prerequisites

- Students should have a good command of English
- Students should be at least at a lower-intermediate level in English.

Introduction

In the process of teaching, instructor may encounter different types of learners. The best language learners are those who have possessed a variety of characteristics. First of all, these learners are motivated to learn and they believe that they are capable of learning. Typically, they have a high tolerance for ambiguity, are patient with themselves, believe good language learners are capable of learning without a teacher's guidance but when a teacher is available, they are able to use him or her as a resource and benefit from the relationship. Rather than seeing the teacher as 'all-knowing' and someone never to be questioned, these learners see the teacher as a facilitator or an equal partner.

Definition of a skill: (n) an ability that has been acquired

According to Rubin and Thompson (1983) as cited in Nunan (2000), a good language learner possesses some of these following characteristics.

1. **Good learners find their own way (take responsibility):** good language learners find their own way and take charge of their learning. They find the methods that are best for them as individual learners. They learn from others and experiment with different methods.
2. **Good learners organize information about language:** good language learners organize their study of the language, and they organize information about the language they study. (for ex. From simple to hard)
3. **Good learners are creative and experiment with language:** good language learners are creative. They understand that language is creative. They experiment with the language and play with grammar, words, and sounds.
4. **Good learners make their own opportunities,** and find strategies for getting practice in using the language inside and outside the classroom.
5. **Good learners learn to live with uncertainty and develop strategies (be motivated and patient):** for making sense of the target language good language learners learn to live with uncertainty by focusing on the meaning of what they can understand, by not getting flustered, and by continuing to talk or listen without necessarily understanding every word.

6. Good learners use mnemonics (rhymes, word associations, etc. to recall what has been learned) find Strategies: good language learners use mnemonics and other memory strategies to recall what they are learning. (For ex. The word “fanboys” to remember the English conjunctions)

7. Good learners make errors work: good language learners make errors work for them and not against them. You learn a second language by trial and error

8. Good learners use linguistic knowledge, including knowledge of their first language in mastering a second language (use their prior knowledge). In other words, remember your roots.

9. Good learners let the context (extra-linguistic knowledge and knowledge of the world) help them in comprehension: good language learners use contextual clues to aid their comprehension of the language. They maximize use of all potential contexts around the language attended to for enhancing comprehension.

10. Good learners learn to make intelligent guesses (guess intelligently): good language learners learn to make intelligent guesses.

11. Do not worry about every detail: good learners learn chunks of language as wholes and formalized routines to help them perform ‘beyond their competence’. For example, they may learn idioms, proverbs, or other phrases knowing what the whole phrase means without necessarily understanding each individual part.

12. Good learners learn production techniques (e.g. techniques for keeping a conversation going): good language learners learn certain production techniques that also fill in the gaps in their own competence.

13. Good learners learn different styles of speech and writing: good language learners learn different styles of speech or writing to learn to vary their language according to the formality of the situation.

14. Use Hacks and Tricks: good language learners learn certain tricks that keep conversations going.

15. Motivation to Communicate: one of the most important characteristics of a good language learner is finding a motivation to communicate which will make a huge difference in your learning efforts. For instance: having a foreigner friend from US can teach you many things about English.

References

Behabadi, F., & Behfrouz, B. (2013). Learning styles and characteristics of good language learners in the Iranian context. *International journal on new trends in education and their implications*. 4(2), 41-49.

Nunan, David (2000), *Language Teaching Methodology* (2nd Impression), Harlow, Pearson Education Ltd.

<http://www.englishpost.org>

<https://www.definitions.net/definition/skill>