

better language learning

Let's look at good language learners for this newsletter. The list below offers actions students can take to more effectively learn English and become "good" language learners. By no means is the list complete, and I'm sure additional points can be brainstormed. It's also important to note that not every student needs to display every point. If a student displayed or pursued a majority of these ideas, then we can still consider him a good language learner.

In no particular order, good language learners:

- 1: Are independent learners who take active control of their learning.
- 2: Aren't inhibited (or at least try to be less inhibited) when using the language.
- 3: Develop a feel for the language through practice and risk taking. They experiment with grammar and vocabulary, and fit these pieces together much like a jigsaw puzzle.
- 4: Find and/or make opportunities to practice the language, both inside and outside the classroom.
- 5: Make intelligent guesses. In addition, when wrong, they seek out the reason for their mistakes (either immediately or later).
- 6: Monitor their speaking, as well as the speaking of others. This can take the form of close listening to TV programs, movies, conversations with native speakers, etc.
- 7: Try to reproduce or use the phrases, grammar, and/or vocabulary picked up in the previous point.
- 8: Analyze the phrases, grammar, and/or vocabulary picked up in the sixth point.
- 9: Learn how to participate and maintain a conversation, rather than react to a conversation.
- 10: Learn different styles of speaking and writing according to the formality and the content of the situation.
- 11: Use mnemonics and other systems/strategies to improve retention.
- 12: Regularly assess their speaking and mistakes.
- 13: Revisit notes and classroom information to remember, retain, and better use new material.

Why raise these points?

It's important to realize why some students are successful (or more successful) than others, and improve at a more rapid pace. With a general understanding of what makes language learners good, it then becomes easier for the teacher to offer advice, set goals, and construct lessons and activities which offer greater improvement for the students. In addition, from the students' point of view, a better understanding of these points empowers them. They can take a more active and responsible role in their studies.

Lastly, with these as a start, it becomes easier to brainstorm additional points that you see and experience in your classroom. Each classroom and each set of students are different, and we can glean new ideas to make our lessons more accessible to more students, and make them effective learners of English.

Have great classes!

Chris Cotter

Heads Up English

Better Language Teaching

<http://www.betterlanguageteaching.com>