

THE GOOD LANGUAGE LEARNER

According to Joan Rubin

The good language learner

- Is a willing and accurate guesser
- Has a strong drive to communicate
- Is uninhibited
- Attends to form
- Practices by seeking out conversation
- Monitors his or her own speech and the speech of others
- Attends to meaning

According to David Stern

The good language learner:

- Has a personal learning style or positive learning strategies
- Has an active approach to the learning task
- Has a tolerant and outgoing approach to the target language and empathy with its speakers
- Has technical know-how about how to tackle a language
- Has strategies of experimentation and planning with the object of developing the new language into an ordered system and of revising this system progressively
- Is consistently searching for meaning
- Is willing to practice
- Is willing to use the language in real communication
- Has self-monitoring ability and critical sensitivity to language use
- Is able to develop the target language more and more as a separate reference system and is able to learn to think in it

According to Rod Ellis

The good language learner will:

- Be able to avoid developing negative anxiety and inhibitions in response to the group dynamics of the learning context
- Seek out all opportunities to use the target language
- Make maximum use of the opportunities afforded to practice listening to and responding to speech in L2 addressed to him or her or to others, attending to meaning rather than form
- Supplement learning derived from direct contact with speakers of the L2 with learning derived from study techniques (such as making vocabulary lists) and involving attention to form
- Possess sufficient analytic skills to perceive, categorize, and store the linguistic features of the L2, and also to monitor errors

- Possess a strong reason for learning the L2 (which may reflect an integrative or an instrumental motivation) and also develop a strong 'task motivation', responding positively to the learning tasks chosen or provided.
- Be prepared to experiment by taking risks, even if they make him or her appear foolish
- Be capable of adapting to different learning conditions

Some results from SLA Research, (according to Archibald):

1. Communicative competence is a complex construction; native speakers have very complex knowledge and abilities. Hence the learner's task is enormously complex.
2. Adults and adolescents can acquire a second language.
3. L2 learner language (interlanguage) is governed by a system. As a result, the learner's errors are systematic.
4. A learner's interlanguage is constrained by certain, as yet unspecified, linguistic universals (perhaps Universal Grammar).
5. Knowledge of language is not the whole story. The learner requires both knowledge and ability (or control).
6. Acquisition may fossilize when learners meet their communicative needs.
7. Context and content facilitate second language learning (as we see in content language teaching such as French Immersion).
8. Instruction can make a difference. It can affect the rate of second language learning. How it affects the route is less clear.
9. Focus on form within a communicative context leads to improved accuracy in the L2 learners.
10. Modified input and interaction (teacher talk and foreigner talk) can be helpful to the L2 learner (it can lead to comprehensible input).
11. There is a great deal of individual variation in second language acquisition. This justifies an eclectic L2 pedagogy.
12. A well developed L1 is crucial to succeeding in an L2 school (Heritage Language Programmes; Deaf Children)

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