SUCCESSFUL AND UNSUCCESSFUL LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES OF STUDENTS

The English language performance of learners is deteriorating. The lack of exposure to and opportunity to use English, particularly in rural areas has drawn the attention of researchers and language educators alike. This study aimed to identify the language learning strategies and common problems in learning English among successful and unsuccessful students in a rural area. A survey was conducted on 100 students in a rural school using the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) version 7.0 by Oxford (1990). The findings revealed that watching television was one of the most common modes used by both successful and unsuccessful rural students to improve their English language proficiency. Successful students tended to depend more on tuition to master their English if compared to unsuccessful students. Both groups of students had difficulties in pronunciation and putting ideas into words in writing and speaking. In terms of language learning strategies, metacognitive strategies ranked the highest in preference indicating that these students had the ability to centre their learning, arrange and plan their learning, and evaluate their learning. The successful students were better able to use compensation strategies to make up for limited knowledge of the language. On the other hand, the unsuccessful students depended heavily on affective strategies to boost their confidence but the successful language learners did not need to resort to such strategies. The findings showed that metacognitive and compensation strategies are better language learning strategies, suggesting that it might be feasible to give language learners exposure to these strategies in class.

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