

HOW ENGLISH LEARNER SUCCEEDED IN DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES

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ABSTRACT

This paper gives attention to Indonesian Ph.D students that have some challenges in learning English. The circumstance contexts of Batam as boarder zone to neighbor countries such as Singapore and Malaysia are exposed. As the interview data focus on the Ph. D students in Malaysia, being lecturer in Batam, few sample could be explored but deeply in a focus group discussion. Researcher asks why a few individuals succeed in achieving competence in English where the majority is more fail understandably. The research theory of individual learner differences such as aptitude, motivation and learning strategy, have been included even though in the foreign language learner context, less empirical investigation of whether the factors could explain Foreign Language achievement. This could be due to the exposure to use of English is severely limited. It is known that classroom behavior must be understood in its social and cultural context. A small-scale exploratory study into the attitudes, learning behavior and English achievement of the 7 Ph.D students in Batam has been reported. Analysis of interview data shows that formal and informal learning opportunities seem a bit scarce, frustrating most English learners. Through the students as the respondent has demonstrated a personal investment to learn, and resourcefulness to pursue their goals independently.

Keywords: Language Learner, Circumstances

ABSTRAK

Fokus artikel penelitian ini adalah mahasiswa Doktoral yang mengalami kendala didalam belajar Bahasa Inggris. Kontek suasana yang menyorot pada wilayah Batam sebagai daerah perbatasan dengan negara tetangga seperti Singapura dan Malaysia. Sebagai data wawancara, ianya dihususkan pada pelajar Doktoral yang belajar di Malaysia dan menjadi Dosen di Batam. Dengan jumlah sampel yang sedikit, penelitian ini menggali lebih jauh pada hasil wawancara melalui Focus Group Discussion. Peneliti menanyakan hal-hal yang berkaitan dengan keberhasilan belajar bahasa inggris, juga kesulitan yang dihadapi masing masing pembelajar tidak sama. Dari sisi teori, *individual learner differences* seperti *aptitude*, *motivation*, dan *learning strategies* ikut dibahas, meskipun didalam kontek pembelajar bahasa asing, masih sedikit investigasi empiris tentang apakah faktor-faktor tersebut dapat menjelaskan pencapaian kemampuan bahasa. Hal ini tentu dikarenakan suasana belajar dan penggunaan bahasa Inggris itu sendiri masih sangat terbatas di kehidupan sehari-hari. Hal lain juga dikarenakan karena suasana kelas yang seharusnya dimengerti dalam kontek sosial dan budaya. Sedikit ekplorasi tentang prilaku, kebiasaan belajar, dan pencapaian bahasa inggris dari Mahasiswa Doktoral yang berdomisili di Batam ikut dilaporkan pada penelitian ini. Dari analisa wawancara ditemukan bahwa suasana belajar Bahasa Inggris baik formal maupun tidak formal sebahagian besar membikin pembelajar prustasi. Melalui respon Mahasiswa Doktoral sebagai responden memberikan gambaran bahwa investasi perorangan untuk belajar dan segala sumberdaya yang ada dapat mengantarkan mereka kepada tujuan belajar dengan mandiri.

INTRODUCTION

For most of English as Foreign Language settings, they are commonly found paradox: Where English language competence is potentially most valuable to individuals and their families, it is a such difficult level to acquire. Smith (2000) stated allegedly English with educational improvements, could encourage more benefit those disadvantaged communities of developing world such as Indonesia by giving individuals access to more intellectually and financially rewarding jobs. This could make societies more attractive for investor. Anyway the such hard evidence can be lack. The kinds of communities are sometimes unable to gather the conditions in which language skills can grow. The less exposure and access to the language use in life limit learners comprehensible input, while opportunities to use the language in real communication, especially in verbal communication, are rare. In educational institution level, morale may be low, resources for individual or collective study may be scarce, and teachers themselves may lack the language skills and methodological awareness to improve their pupils' English.

This is general circumstance of the English learned in Batam as part of Indonesia. Even though the island is only forty five minutes from Malaysia and Singapore, but still this zone is still less access of English community. Other provincial areas of Indonesia are quite the same condition. Government and international donors have long complained of inadequate levels of English among university graduates (for example, Sinclair and Webb 1985; Priyadi and Ismuadi, 1998). Number of research has been done with the University student level but still the data remain the same. One of them is the data from the Jambi University, indicated that about seventy five per cent of students enter university with no more than 'elementary' level proficiency although after six year learning English at school (Lamb, 2000). Universities themselves rarely provide more than four credits (64 hours maximum) of English instruction for non-English majors, some even offered the lesson in language not English with the result that students having less opportunity to use the language. The less of time in English subject impacted to the students reading ability. As the result the graduates enter the labor market without the economically valuable asset of English proficiency. The similar case can be Master and even Ph. D graduates.

Yet a few students do succeed in acquiring a certain competence in English when they reach university as undergraduate students, and this is continued to t next level of their studies in postgraduate. One may question what makes these few individuals to transcend the contextual constraints, which then others could be helped. What and who carry the burden of their failure with them throughout their working lives? This question is not stopping, and had been addressed by various research and paper, but there is no instant process of learning, and this is phenomenon that can be explored.

To the researcher experience in teaching English in University, he is taking the opportunity as an entry point into the atmosphere of campus and to investigate the Ph.D students experience in learning English. It is to find preliminary answers to the following two questions:

1. What learning opportunities do learners of English find in English Foreign

Language context?

2. Why are some learners willing to take advantage of these opportunities, according to their own reports, but not others?

The section below explores the issues behind the two questions stated above and to review the relevant contributions in term of academic literature. The data presentation is then to be discussed further and related to the literature. The conclusion and suggestion for the next result stated in the last.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Learners and learning

Having opportunities to learn English for the most of adolescents in developing countries like Indonesia is intended to be at school as primary site of foreign language learning. In some cases, the school classroom program in fact differs widely in extending language learning support. In Indonesian, English is formally as the subject from junior high schools. The pupils learn English lesson takes four hours per week and continued to Senior High School. The subject is compulsory for the tertiary level, which then optional for the higher education level such as Master and Doctorate.

Predicting what contribution to the classroom is a bit difficult and the case of Master and Doctorate level are influenced from their educational background. As highlighted by Azarnoosh (2014) the role of motivation, attitudes, behaviors and social factors in the long-term process of learning a foreign language some cases overruled the one that overtly taught which most cases less impact. It could be categorized to informal situation. It is possible school has a mainly indirect influence on Indonesian learners' achievement, in the way that it stimulates or discourages other modes of language learning. This circumstances of remain the same as they are continuing their studies to the higher level.

The exposure to English could exist outside the classroom setting, and what plays outside the classroom is informal instead of formal. The exposure to English could happen home, libraries, social work, neighborhood, and internet link access. Learners in English-speaking countries are having plentiful opportunities to practice the language in daily activity. Contradicting to English as Foreign Language settings outdoor class learning could contribute to the language acquisition progress. In fact it is not the one can have in unconscious surrounding.

In term of individual success yet, as Larsen-Freeman (2001) stated language learners would succeed in a more conducive condition. So a language learner should consider qualities that can distinguish a such-unstable condition from the under-achieving majority. There are many literatures that explore individual difference in language. Schmidt (2010) stated people learn about the things that they pay attention to and do not learn much about the things they do not attend to. He explored the individual difference in learning language depend on their motivation, aptitude, and language learning history, learners notice and become aware of when processing language input. But specific to the empirical studies of individual learner differences in developing country contexts are rare exist. Ehrmana, *et al.* (2003) addressed the subject of individual differences in language learning, especially as they are reflected in learning styles, learning strategies, and

affective including aptitude, gender, culture, and age. As Ehrmana, *et al.* (2003) explored various aspects of individual learner and conclude that this circumstances seems to be a very fertile time for unraveling the issues that relate to how individuals learn languages, how and why they undertake and succeed in language study. All those are such challenging mystery to unravel. Contradicting to (Ehrmana, *et al.* 2003), (Zafar and Meenakshi, 2012) explored individual learner differences, and concluded that they play a crucial role in the acquisition of second language. However, despite the efforts of many researchers at reaching a conclusive theory with regard to this, success has eluded them. At present, the scientific study of the role of these differences in second language learning may not be very sophisticated and advanced, but it can be hoped that the growing awareness of the need to focus on the individual student and his individuality in a language learning situation will fuel the need to study the phenomenon in a detailed and empirical manner.

Wen & Johnson as cited in Lamb (2002) conducted a study of English achievement-related variables among students in tertiary level in China. They identified some variables as having a direct or indirect effect on language learning successful, including gender, proficiency, and various learning strategies, including the ability to manage learner own learning. However, the study focused on learners who were by choice studying the language intensively at university. In term of general population of school-age learners in developing country settings, either formal or informal learning resources are relatively impoverished. it seems that of individual characteristics configuration different would link to success. E.g, although aptitude has been consistently found to be the ‘most successful predictor of language learning success’ (Larsen-Freeman, 2001), its traditional definition as a largely cognitive attribute may be inadequate to describe the personal qualities.

Gardner (1985; 2005; 2007; 2012) argued that motivation is likely to be a stronger predictor of success than aptitude. This case is where learners have to opt in or out of opportunities for learning. Some of his research refer to socio-educational factors or integrated motivation. Some scholars consider Garner Theory of motivation as traditional integrative/instrumental, intrinsic/extrinsic, but still these have been considered as important. The motivation concept anyway has expanded in recent years, e.g to incorporate a temporal dimension. In more specific, motivation is where learners have to sustain their efforts over many years. Motivation is multidimensional construct, including cognitive, metacognitive, motivational, behavioral, and environmental processes (Dörnyei and Otto, 1998; Dörnyei and Skehan, 2003). They also recognize the important role played by social context in shaping an individual’s motivation to learn.

Successful learners would need a degree of autonomy, to be involved in self-initiated learning in isolation from teachers and other learners’ (Benson, 2001). Is the autonomy conditioned? This question has been discussed by some scholars. Or minimum it could be in different forms such as a so called ‘collectivist societies’ of Asia regions than the West. (Littlewood, 1999). For the long term learning, success depends on language learner ability to acquire, self-esteem, or depend on metacognitive knowledge and learning strategies. (Wenden, 2001).

In the present, scholars have reevaluated the term of the ‘good language learner’ from a sociocultural perspective. How the internal characteristics of language learners were less important than the characteristics of their social interactions. It is also the practice in their communities in which they have been learning English (Norton and Toohey, 2001). In socio-educational model (Gardner, 1985; 2005; 2007; 2012) proposes that through motivation, there are two variables, integrativeness and attitudes toward the learning situation. The labeling of the integrativeness construct declares that initial language learning was motivated by identification with the parents and family. In some other measurement, Gardner (2005, 2012) stated, integrativeness is measured by three scales, integrative orientation, attitudes toward the other language community, and an interest in foreign languages.

AN INTERVIEW STUDY OF INDONESIAN STUDENTS

This pilot study is conducted to investigate the successful and unsuccessful learners in order to identify which of factors internally on learner and if any other factor not investigated before. The other factors could be worthy further, through deeper exploration and investigation. In most of research in Language learners have been focused on junior and senior high school students, or maximum tertiary level. The researcher found the respond are not informative exploring the real circumstances of learner in the high school level. This pilot study is to use a ‘focused’ interview format (Cohen *et al*, 2007). As Cohen *et al* (2007) explained that through focus group interview, the reliance is on the interaction within the group who discuss a topic supplied by the researcher. Through the interview, the researcher yielded a collective rather than an individual view. Yet, the participants interact with each other rather than with the interviewer, such that the views of the participants can emerge the participants’ rather than the researcher’s agenda can predominate. The general questions about their language learning experience during at school and after graduation from bachelor and Master. Once a while, the researcher asked respondents to clarify their comments as needed.

As what Lamb (2002) investigated on the undergraduate students, the data showed that formal and informal learning opportunities are indeed scarce, frustrating the majority of English learners. The few individuals who have overcome these difficulties demonstrate a personal investment in learning, and the autonomy and resourcefulness to pursue their goals independently. Therefore this study is investigating to the higher level students, where Doctorate is considered as the highest hierarchy academic level a scholar would do in their career.

A total of seven doctorate students, four male and three females, from three different faculties (Economics, Information Technology and Education) are interviewed. The Doctorate students which are lecturer as well grouped as per their TOEP they had taken for their lecturer test passing. The summary is as per table 1:

Interviews were in Bahasa Indonesia for the low-achieving students and in English for the two other groups. They lasted from 15 to 25 minutes, and were recorded and transcribed. The comments of the three groups of students (low, middle and high achievers) were then analyzed and compared. The group grade

category is based on their TOEP, TOEIC, TOEFL or IELTS score. The respondents were selected based on their formal English score as mentioned. Low advanced to upper advanced as high, low intermediate to intermediate as middle and beginner to upper beginner as low.

Table 1. Student groups by Degree, Ethnic and Gender

English grade category	Ethnic	Gender
Low	1 Malay	3 M, 1 F
	2 Minang	
	1 Java	
Middle	1 Malay	2 M
	1 Minang	
High	1 Minang	1 F

RESULT AND GENERAL DISCUSSION

RESULTS

All low category students expressed dissatisfaction during their formal school English classes. The time of learning English subject at school was too short, and due to the ratio between student and teacher was not balance so only few opportunities to interact one another. Some of them even state that learning English need more practice and this could only be achieved outside the classroom. Student 1 declared that he was left behind in class by clever students who spoke in English. Then he concluded that it was impossible to acquire as others did. Student 2 added that it was not easy to ask the teachers if he did not really understand what the teacher said in English. Therefore he tried himself to find the answer by asking friends or asked the teacher to say in Bahasa Indonesia. It was too many things to master English. Contradicting to the low category, the middle category student complained of teachers who were not themselves competent in English. Student 5 stated that all his teachers seldom use English in class. Teachers evidently find it difficult to individualize learning in large mixed-level classes, frustrating those above and those below the average skill level.

A common view was expressed in all the three groups that at school, English was just a subject to take. Student 5 mentioned that the lesson would give more knowledge to the students during English day or other another day when they were pushed to speak and write in English. Then the students acknowledged that taking private English course is necessary. This happened in the middle and top group students.

Researcher: “Why is your English better than other students”?

Student 7 : “I like English since I was elementary school, and I learn seriously this subject since Junior High School. A private English school was offered to me since my childhood”.

The most common time for taking a private course in English was in the first year of junior high school, when students aged thirteen to fourteen, that also

the time when most pupils start learning English in formal school. For those who were not able to afford the fee for extra private course, this may indicate the success is neglected. Some students explained that the teaching and learning process at private courses sometimes so boring. This was due to the focus on grammar and vocabulary mostly. Most of them joined the course less than a year. Only one student stated that she studied privately for more than a year, and to have benefited unequivocally. This suggests that taking an English private course is not such necessarily as cause of proficiency, but reflecting a strong will to lean English independently, either from the students themselves or family support.

Overall, the comments of Ph. D students recommend that public education have not been maximum giving opportunities to learn in how to use English. This is proven to be negative experience. However, as English subject is as per other subject and a distinction is made between English as subject at school and as a practical skill, any negative experience is not affecting their motivation to learn the language. One of the high level student declare that the way of teacher taught was not really qualified Overall comment from the respondent if the experience is positive, the student can be influenced by the school. The success of language learners rely on the school activities quality. From the seven respondents, three students of middle group above had performed well during English lesson. They stated particular English teachers helped them. The way of teaching of the teacher helped them understood and being fond of learning English. Students 7 stated the way the English teachers behave at my school were really much innovating for the students, then when the teacher gave an enjoyable lesson, she felt very happy and interested in studying. Learning English is enjoyable. It depends on the teacher or lecturer.

All of the participants claimed to have learned some English outside the classroom. Those include the homework from teacher and lecturer. At its most minimal, the learning activity was looking up an English word in a dictionary; at the other end of the scale, some claimed to meet regularly with friends to practice their English together. Some other even had tried to have regular contact with native speaker either through internet or face to face. The activities indicate that even in this area setting, formal and informal, it is possible to gain access to English. One may say that it is usually authentic, un-simplified English, as in magazines, films and the Internet, and the majority of learners never reach the threshold level where they could begin to make sense of English and reach comprehensible input.

All learning activities variously stated by the students are categorized and presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Studen Activities

Student Activities	English Level Catagory		
	Low	Middle	High
- Speaking casually with friends/relatives	1	2	1
- Reading textbooks/magazines	0	2	1
- Using email Internet	1	2	1
- Studying grammar/vocabulary	1	2	1
- Using a dictionary	2	2	1
- Watching English Film	2	2	1
- Joining an English club	0	0	1
- Listening to English on local radio (incl.songs)	0	1	1
- Speaking to foreigners in Indonesia	1	1	1
- Never learns or uses English	0	0	0

The middle and high grade level students showed great interest in the process of learning itself or any sophisticated understanding of it. They enjoy the learning process, and reluctantly acquiring the language step by step. The way these students talked is typical:

Researcher: “You said that you learnt English mainly independently. Would you tell me about how you did”?

S7: “Mostly, I like reading newspaper, news, and article in English by myself. I usually go a community where English is spoken and used as a communication such as in my office or meeting with expatriates where I can maximize my potential. I have a sister in Singapore where she is an officer there where I communicate with her in English”.

Researcher: “You said you read things by yourself, communicate with others in English, what have you learned from those to acquire the language”.

S7: “Many things, at least new vocabulary and grammar that can enrich me”.

Researcher: “Do you have English book at home”?

S7: “Only few books, but mostly e-book downloaded from internet”.

In the table 2 shows a difference between the middle and high grade group to low grade group. Three comments from participants that they consider learning English as essentially a social or community activity. They mean the social activities around their life where they have interaction. As Ph. D students they involved on many activities and the expectation, the support of English are coming from the community. The why they are not successful to learn English is because of no person to practice English. Eg. Student 4 complained “my community where I spent my time mostly not allowing me to speak English or study English a lot”. It seems that the possibility of learning English counted on a joint agreement among community to do so. In fact that the new university self-access center is not being used for individual study in the way such centers are

used in most of western countries, or other part of well-developed countries. However it is acknowledged to the group activities such as game-playing and small discussion in English. Some successful learners stated there is only few other language learners' respect upon some solitary activities such as reading, writing and studying grammar or vocabulary. It is to be considered that in a culture where cooperation and sociability are importantly valued, they indicated a greater willingness to act alone and independently.

There could be some evidence that English learners who do try to use the language need to pay such social costs. One of the middle grade participant stated "well sometimes people around us make fun of us if we try to speak English". The high grade respondent stated that she doesn't prefer to use English with friend as she feels not comfortable with the response sometimes. However, motivation seems to be surprisingly high among all grade level participants, as every student comment that getting to know English is very important. This is true even for those who recognize they have failed utterly to learn it so far. Eg. one of responses.

Researcher: "Do you think English is important to you'?"

Student1: "Yes it is".

Researcher: 'Can you explain why'?"

Student1: "Because in every aspect in life English is used, some important references are written in English, books, journals, manual book of Electronic devices, and many job requirement need candidate master the language".

From the comments indicated that English is seen as useful for academic or general work and career purposes. It is just like instrumental. The 'integrative' motives are also expressed as they may refer to an amorphous global rather than national one. A Student 5 participant mentioned "I have a café business, and I see some of friends can speak English well with tourists and very fluently". Communication with English native speaker is a motive. However attitudes towards English-speaking peoples and their culture were not significantly positive in the middle and high grade. Most of them admire the West's educational achievements and level of life, but not to the culture. Some of the participant thought that western culture is the one not appropriate to the east point of view.

The middle and high grade participant commented an intrinsic pleasure in learning or using English, meanwhile the low grade level expressed nothing much pleasure. The last, most of parents and family of the participants are able to speak English. But they acknowledged the importance of others as part of the motivation to learn English. Family point of view is deliberately encouraging them to learn English. Parents and family never stop giving the spirit to talk in English no matter the mistake they may have.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

In this section of the paper the researcher has discussed these results in relation to the two research questions stated earlier. The results indicate that the public education sector contributes little towards students' English language

skills. However they are not learning English at school, how they learn? From the interviews reported hint at some damaging effects such a general antipathy towards formal English study among the low and middle grade learners which is the majority. Among the low grade learners, there is a belief that English is almost impossibly difficult and among all as a reluctance to use the language publicly. In term of private English courses, although they are frequently credited with developing language ability, not least by the students, the short length of time that the middle and high grade participants spent actually studying in such courses casts doubt on this assumption. This indicates that determined learners can find learning opportunities in the context of their daily lives, even when material resources are very limited. A more precise assessment of different out-of-class learning activities would require longitudinal research, can be through the use of email communication etc.

It is necessary to identify what counts as a learning opportunity. In promoting an 'ecological' view of language learning, van Lier (2000) refer to the term 'affordance' this means the relationship between the environment properties and the active learner' instead of 'input' that locates the learning process narrowly inside the learner's brain. The study of how English is learned in places such like Batam or other part of cities also foregrounds the importance of the environment. This due to the fact that the context exploration is necessary cope with persistence to know what 'affordances' exist. However the One-off interviews would not provide the amount of detail needed to give a clear picture of the environment as a whole.

The question about why some learners willing to take advantage of opportunities, according to their own reports while others are not can be further describe as is. It can refer to what van Lier (2000) stated that if the language learner is active and engaged, he/she will perceive linguistic affordances and use them for linguistic action. Where the 'linguistic ecosystem' is impoverished, however, we can assume that a learner will need to be more than normally 'active and engaged'. The linguistic ecosystem can be translated to the social surround where the learner interacts. What have been stated above as average aptitude or mental capacity for language learning, enabling a learner to draw greater sustenance from linguistic affordances, may still be important. However one of comment from the high grade participant (Student 7) stated that she has talent in language. One may say that not all people have in languages. Talent is a blessing from God, but this could be explored. Through this small this study, it cannot be described in detail to provide evidence to support or refute this. It may, however, offer insights into which learners do become 'active and engaged'.

In term of motivation, all the students as participants declared a strong motivation to learn English, in fact only a few made progress. We could ask what kind of language learners' motivation is most effective for successful learning and examine whether an expressed belief in the personal importance of English is equivalent to their learning motivation. Dörnyei (2001; 2009) Motivation has been widely accepted by both teach-ers and researchers as one of the key factors that influence the rate and success of second/foreign language learning. Motivation provides the primary impetus to initiate learning the language and later the driving

force to sustain the long and often tedious learning process. In term of process model of motivation, the comments of all the students constitute expressions of 'choice motivation', that is, recognition of the value or importance of English. Further Dörnyei (2001; 2009) declared that whatever the potency of their chosen goals, language learners may never actually seek out opportunities to learn unless other motivational forces are activated too. A low expectation of success might mean that a learner never 'crosses the Rubicon of action' and seeks out learning opportunities (Dörnyei, 2001). It is important to be emphasized in this part that the low grade level students in this study felt how difficult English was. As all of Ph.D students, they feel what had been exposed during their school era and tertiary level did not much help. However what have been to be optimistic is the family members such as parents, siblings other influential figures, have the potential to convert this initial favorable disposition into purposeful action. In fact some students do mention teachers or relations had played this role. This mini research has sustains the motivation of highest academic level students in small part of Indonesia.

The successful learners directly or indirectly a certain pleasure in using the language contrasts with the frustration experienced by other language learner. But in a one-off study as this mini research, it is not easy describe if this reflects a genuine intrinsic motivation to learn English, or rather a sense of satisfaction generated by success. Refer to integrative/instrumental distinction, it seems that the high-achieving students have mainly instrumental motives to learn English and keep a clear distinction between the language on one hand, which they recognize as valuable, and the culture and people on the other, which they politely subject to criticism upon western culture. This could support (Dörnyei, 2009) that the integrative motivational dichotomy at the language level is obviously misleading in providing a simplification of the intricate processes determining the social dimension of L2 motivation. Earlier, Noels et al's (2000) as cited in Lamb (2002) that an integrative orientation is not after all 'fundamental to the motivational process, but has relevance only in specific sociocultural contexts of which this is not one.

Through this study, one cannot discover strongly into participants' conceptions of themselves, but there are indications of a fruitful line of enquiry. It is possible that the English language in some other parts in Indonesia also challenges individuals' sense of self. This could help to explain the import of social rituals into university English classes. This may differ to the English classes for English literature students which is not parts of the object. In autonomy and learning strategies, one could recognize that the high grade learners are as high achieving student in English in this study was essentially self-motivated.

Finally, this study drives to the understanding that the language learners can make faster progress in English if they were given training in self-instruction. As Benson (2001) as cited in Lamb (2002) stated if we know little about the ways in which learners go about setting their own agendas in the longer term or about how classroom learning fits in with the agendas, more could be done. Or if initial motivation to learn is high, but the resources to learn are low, or time is not appropriate, it is arguable that the most important role of English classes is to

enable learners to seek out and exploit learning opportunities. That could be individually or more likely with friends, in peer groups.

CONCLUSION

The study present to confirm that the circumstances of foreign language learning in part of Indonesia (Batam) is indeed difficult, and that those who succeed manage to do it in spite of, rather than due to, the services of educational institutions. Both state and private education sector as formal institutions could impact upon individuals' learning, but do not have a determining effect much. The more important are attributes such as a personal investment in learning, willingness and ability to study it autonomously, and these enable individuals to exploit over time what learning opportunities exist in their particular context of learning.

Throughout this paper, the writer acknowledged the small size of the sample of learners observed, and the lack of corroborating data for the interview transcripts. Any conclusions, beyond the obvious need for further research, need to be made very cautiously and deeply. It is also necessary to have longitudinal ethnographic studies of a limited number of individual learners to illuminate the way these personal qualities interact with features of the environment. Quantitatively a large-scale research can investigate other possible factors distinguishing successful or unsuccessful learners, eg. aptitude, gender, and socioeconomic status. This could be either eastern or western context.

The writer hopes this study has contributed a bit to sharpen the focus for future research into this important but neglected area. The keyword upon individual language learning successful is that rewards would come in terms of better study and work opportunities. But seems it only constitutes to a small minority.

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