

# **The University of Birmingham**

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## **The Good Language Learner**

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Do you think that there is such a thing as a ‘*good* language learner’? To what extent do you think that it is possible for people to become ‘better’ language learners?

## **1. Introduction - Learning a language**

Learning is the acquisition of any type of knowledge or skill and it is perhaps one of the most important mental functions in humans. Many psychologists and other professionals from other fields have attempted to define the learning process and have proposed theories on how humans learn. However, they have been unable to account for all the mental processes involved as there are different types of human learning (Brown, 2007:99). Learning is a complex concept which involves the processes of perception, acquisition, retention and the subsequent organisation of retained information to facilitate recall at a later time. These are essential in the acquisition and internalisation of a language (Brown, 2007:8, 86).

Many theories on human learning and research into second language acquisition have, in the past fifty years, helped to build the basis for approaches and methods to language learning. Each one of them emphasises the importance of one or other particular learning component or area to facilitate the task of learning a language (Lightbrown and Spada, 2006: xv).

It is a common belief that certain people have a natural talent for learning languages faster and more effectively than others. What then constitutes a good language learner? What characteristics do these learners possess? This paper will attempt to address and identify some of the attributes associated with effective language learning and then verify the extent to which it is possible for people to become 'better language learners' based on the writer's personal opinion and supported by opinions provided by adult learners to a questionnaire (Appendix I and II). These respondents who took part in the questionnaire had completed a 36 hour professional training and development course to improve their English at work. Students had two, ninety minute sessions each week for a total of 24 weeks. The objective of the training course was to improve learners' knowledge of commercial English for formal emails and letters and improve communicative skills for telephoning and meetings.

### **1.1 Effective learners**

Throughout my years of teaching both children and adults, I have had many effective learners and some less effective learners. Among the effective learners, all have had a need or desire to learn English for one reason or another. They are determined people

who do not give up easily despite difficulties encountered along the way and despite being far from being fluent, measure their progress in stages. From my experience, effective learners are persistent in that they do not give up or back out from a more complex communicative situation but will ‘make do’ with the knowledge and resources they have at hand and do not fear making mistakes but learn from them. Some of them are reflective learners in that they think about the language, the grammar and how it behaves. These learners often ask very valid and interesting questions. Effective learners enjoy encountering the language outside the classroom in different circumstances and contexts. They will try to understand a film without reading the subtitles and consequently ask what certain expressions mean; they try to decipher and understand the lyrics of a song they like: they may try to read a book or even buy magazines in English and guess the meaning of unknown words from the context. Many of them are organised and use different techniques to order and classify information, such as separate notebooks for vocabulary or using different colours to highlight and separate information. However, despite the different characteristics and/or strategies, there is one aspect which is common to all – they enjoy learning English.

Some of these characteristics are those which Rubin and Thomson (1983 in Nunan, 1999:57) suggest are exhibited by efficient learners as presented in table 1.

**Table 1** - Characteristics of the good language learner

<p><b>Good learners:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. find their own way</li> <li>2. organize information about language</li> <li>3. are creative and experiment with language</li> <li>4. make their own opportunities, and find strategies for getting practice in using the language inside and outside the classroom</li> <li>5. learn to live with uncertainty and develop strategies for making sense of the target language without wanting to understand every word</li> <li>6. use mnemonics (rhymes, word associations, and so forth) to recall what has been learned</li> <li>7. make errors work</li> <li>8. use linguistic knowledge, including knowledge of their first language in mastering a second language</li> <li>9. let the context (extralinguistic knowledge and knowledge of the world) help them in comprehension</li> <li>10. learn to make intelligent guesses</li> <li>11. learn chunks of language as wholes and formalized routines to help them perform ‘beyond their competence’</li> <li>12. learn production techniques (e.g., techniques for keeping conversation going)</li> <li>13. learn different styles of speech and writing and learn to vary their language according to the formality of the situation</li> </ol>
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## 2. The learning process

Learning a second language is viewed by many as a long and complex procedure which is dependent on the learning process but also takes into account such variables as the learning styles, learner's individual characteristics and learning strategies which in a sense are all interrelated one with the other (Brown, 2006:57). Several exterior factors such as the social context in which the learner is inserted, the environment of the L2 learning, methodological approaches and past experiences may influence the internal activity of learning, as they may influence learners' beliefs, affective factors, learning styles and strategies.

### 2.1 Beliefs

When stepping into a classroom, learners bring a set of beliefs with them that cover a wide range of pre-conceived ideas. These ideas may influence their attitudes toward the language, its specific nature, the process of acquisition, and their individual goals and expectations:

- their attitudes towards the language itself
  - *is it a language they want to learn or is it an imposition?*
- the nature of the language
  - *is it very different from learner's L1?*
  - *its difficulty, if they believe grammar to be the most difficult then it is grammar they will want to study;*
  - *assumptions about the four language skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking. Which one is more important?*
- the language learning process
  - *learning strategies used by learners;*
  - *teaching methodologies – what they expect from the teacher*
  - *classroom behaviour*
  - *their learning may be restricted due to their age*
- their goals and expectations
  - *want to learn to communicate with other people*
  - *want to learn for pleasure*
  - *some skills may be more important than others*
  - *time needed to be autonomous in the language*

(Richards and Lockhart, 1996:52-56, Brown, 2007:2-3).

The training group discussed in the introduction section was made up of twelve students, many of whom worked with the English language on a daily basis as they had to communicate with suppliers, business associates and other contacts in English. The main problem was that quite a few of the trainees refused to communicate on the telephone due to insecurity and so resorted solely to email communication while others avoided or felt very anxious when they had to communicate in English during meetings. The group was not homogenous in level and seven of the twelve trainees had had very little formal training in English, and this had been several years earlier. Despite some students looking forward to the training course, there were others who were apprehensive due to the situation. They did not know what to expect, had very low self-confidence in themselves as they felt they had no command of the language and some were not given the choice to participate.

During the first lesson, one of the initial tasks that should be carried out is a clarification about the training course and its objectives. Nunan (1999:192) states that making goals explicit help learners to focus on the 'task to come', which enhances their motivation and performance. Learners have a clearer picture of what is expected of them and will be able to reflect on how they can accomplish the objectives that were set out. This may bring to the forefront a complete new set of expectations, interests and strategies and even concerns. At this time it is also advisable to start building rapport between the teacher and students, setting an environment in which students feel at ease to share their ideas, concerns and expectations in relation to the training course, goals and learning process. Students voiced their concerns about the difficulty of learning at their age, lack of formal training, difficulty in grammar and pronunciation among other aspects. Open and honest communication helps to build deeper and stronger relationships between people. Those that came to the lesson with some anxiety felt more relaxed and 'lowered their guard' and at the end of the lesson left with a sense of hope and encouragement. Students saw the teacher as a facilitator and resource, one who is there to help with the learning process and not in a dictating role (Brown, 2001:167). This is an essential step that has an impact on students' affective characteristics, namely their motivation (Nunan, 1999:192). It is at this moment and through this approach that the teacher may start to alter or question some of the pre-conceived ideas and start learners on their way

to becoming good language learners as ‘the educational climate becomes positive, forward-looking and supportive’ (Scrivener, 1994:8).

## **2.2 Affective factors**

These are many affective factors implied in learning a second language and Brown (2007) points out that understanding how learners feel and respond is an extremely important aspect in the process of acquiring a new language. Self-esteem, inhibition, risk taking, anxiety and motivation are variables which are intricately intertwined and affect the process of language learning to a great extent.

Brown also states (2007:155) that ‘no successful cognitive or affective activity can be carried out without some degree of self-confidence’ in oneself – the belief in one’s ‘own capabilities to successfully perform [an] activity’. People obtain their sense of self-esteem from past experiences with others and the exterior world. Self esteem or self-confidence related to a language learning experience may be regarded as specific self-esteem which encompasses the acquisition of the language in general and/or task self-esteem when considering one particular aspect of the process. An example may be speaking in general as a skill or even speaking in very precise situations such as on the telephone (Brown, 2007:155). Learners with a weak self-esteem will feel more inhibition to perform, and will put up barriers to protect themselves against failure. They may not be prepared to take risks, such as making intelligent guesses or experimenting with the language they already know for fear of making mistakes and subsequently feeling embarrassed. This uneasiness is anxiety, the fear of not being able to perform to expectations, expectations which may often be imposed by the learner himself. The negative effects of low self-confidence, inhibition and anxiety on language learning may lead to non-performance, the denial to carry out certain tasks, as learners fear portraying an image of incompetence when dealing in social and professional situations.

This was the case with a few trainees who refused to use the telephone due to the lack of self-confidence in their language abilities which subsequently led to great anxiety when confronted with the task. They would pass the call to someone else in the department. Another trainee also became quite apprehensive when confronted in conferences and

keep all communication acts to a minimum, despite having a fairly good command of the language.

Carl Rogers, an American psychologist suggests that teachers should demonstrate respect, empathy and authenticity (being oneself) as they are three core characteristics that lead to creating an effective learning environment (Scrivener, 1994: 8). This supportive climate that was also mentioned in the previous section should be a constant factor in the classroom and during any interaction outside the classroom, as a 'climate of acceptance (..) will stimulate self-confidence, and encourage participants to experiment and to discover the target language, allowing themselves to take risks without feeling embarrassed' (Dufeu,1994:89-90 cited in Brown, 2007:160). This encouragement slowly 'nurtures' and 'solidifies' students' self-confidence and thus enhances performance. It may be accomplished not only through teacher's encouragement, open communication but also through the use of humour and certain teaching techniques: the use of longer waiting-time for students to reply to questions slowly started to build their 'readiness' or speed of response as well as the quality of their participation, consequently diminishing their shyness or apprehension to speaking (Richards and Lockhart, 1996); the use of group or pair communicative tasks produced further uninhibited practice; providing meaningful activities related to their jobs and sequencing tasks helped to build or extend the knowledge they already possessed; asking authentic questions about their work place and/or business activities/dealings produced authentic non rehearsed language; and tactfully requesting clarification from learners when their transmitted message was unclear or ungrammatical made learners understand that making mistakes is a common factor in speech and that meaning may be negotiated between the interlocutors. All these techniques possibly helped to facilitate the acquisition of the language as many of these tasks implied a need to communicate or provided learners with opportunities to **willingly** produce greater quantity of speech.

Motivation may be a key factor to lessen the negative influences mentioned above in language learning and performance. Research suggests that positive motivation is linked to the desire to continue learning (Lightbrown and Spada, 2006). Nunan suggests that motivation is a combination between effort and desire to achieve. Students who are willing to accept support and encouragement can become better learners. As the course progressed voluntary participation increased and students began to bring concrete

examples from work to class and asked questions about other possible alternatives and situations. They also began to request that they cover other topics and issues in the training and suggested among themselves that they begin to talk to each other in English in their department. Role-play activities grew in popularity, even weaker students demonstrated less hesitation and did their best with the vocabulary they knew, often checking their vocabulary notebooks for new expressions and/or patterns they had learned but had not yet internalised. Students were becoming more responsible for their own learning leading to learner autonomy. However, this is not to say to all students will become good learners. There are instances where the teacher may not be able to 'reach' a student if they are unwilling to accept motivation or their 'defence walls' are so high that they believe they are beyond help due to self-imposed restrictions or culturally bound restrictions. There is a Portuguese idiom "*Burro velho não aprende línguas*", which literally translates into "Old donkey doesn't learn languages", much more derogative than the English version "You can't teach an old dog new tricks". This was the case with one of the trainees who was of the opinion that he would be unable to reach the objectives from the start, limiting himself to be present at some of the lessons without trying to participate. It is needless to say that he eventually withdrew from the training.

### **2.3 Learning styles**

Many of the beliefs previously mentioned may also be influenced by the learner's cognitive or learning styles which is the 'general predisposition, voluntary or not, toward processing information in a particular way' (Skehan, 1991:288 in Brown, 2007:120) and reflect the manner in which learners approach and react to learning situations, which are related to personality styles (Richards and Lockhart, 1996:59). Figure 1 presents an example of four different learning styles.



**Figure 1 – Learner types and learning preferences**

<b>Analytic</b>	
<p><b>Authority-oriented</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsible and dependable</li> <li>• Need structure and sequential progression</li> <li>• Relate well to teacher dominated teaching</li> <li>• Like to write down everything in a notebook, study grammar, learn by reading and learn new words by seeing them</li> </ul>	<p><b>Analytical</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Independent – like studying alone</li> <li>• Able to channel attention and notice detailed aspects of language – field independent</li> <li>• Like to solve problems and develop principals on their own.</li> <li>• Prefer logical, systematic presentation of new learning material</li> <li>• Serious and vulnerable to failure</li> <li>• Like – grammar, reading, finding their own mistakes</li> </ul>
<b>Holistic</b>	
<p><b>Concrete</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use active and direct means of taking in and processing information</li> <li>• Interested in information that has immediate value</li> <li>• Curious, spontaneous</li> <li>• Willing to take risks</li> <li>• Like variety</li> <li>• Dislike routine learning and written work</li> <li>• Preference for verbal and visual experiences</li> <li>• Like to be entertained, as field dependent they are people-orientated</li> <li>• Like to be physically involved in learning</li> <li>• Like – games, pictures, films, video, listening, talking in pairs and practicing English outside the class.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Communicative</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prefer a social approach to learning</li> <li>• Need personal feedback and interaction</li> <li>• Learn well from discussion and group activities</li> <li>• Like watching and listening to native speakers and watching television in English. Like using English outside the classroom.</li> <li>• Learn new words by hearing them and learning by conversation</li> <li>• Field dependent</li> </ul>

Adapted from Nunan, (1999:57), Richards & Lockhart (1996:60) and Skehan (1998:247-9)

There are many other learning/cognitive styles in addition to these that have been identified by educators and psychologists and relate to sensory, cultural and communicative factors but they will not be presented as they are beyond the scope of this paper.

Learning styles are a mixture of affective and cognitive characteristics which are determined by the way learners internalize ‘their total environment’ and as this process is not ‘strictly cognitive’ this would explain why we find physical and affective characteristics in learning styles (Brown, 2007:120). Some consider these styles to be

stable factors in adults (Richards and Lockhart: 1996) while others such as Dörnyei and Skehan question this view. They consider ‘predispositions to be deep-seated’ (Brown, 2007:120) but that some flexibility and adaptation is possible to ‘meet the demands of particular circumstances’ (Dörnyei and Skehan, 2003: 602 in Brown, 2007:120). It would seem then that if learner’s styles are determined not only by their cognitive domain but also by physical and affective characteristics, then being inserted in a different context or reality may encourage and lead to differing styles in a learner.

Learners’ physical and affective factors in their learning styles may have been influenced by previous learning experiences and methodologies. After many years of being exposed to a learning process, learners may have formed very definite views on how they should approach the learning situation and what approaches to expect from the teacher even if past experiences were not related to language learning. These experiences may be directly related to social and cultural backgrounds. It may be possible to suggest that certain learning styles are almost imposed by exterior factors which may affect learners.

It was interesting to note that all the learners in the course strived to register everything that was said in class. In other learning situations, there have been students who organise, classify new information into different sections or functions, possibly using different colours. This was not apparent with these learners. New vocabulary, expressions were not separated from grammatical forms making it difficult to find a new word or expression that had been learnt a few weeks before. This manner of ‘processing information’ was perhaps influenced by their previous learning experiences in which teachers held a ‘dictating role’, as the holder of all information and knowledge and students limited themselves to listening and registering. If students have never had the opportunity to interact in class or carry out activities in groups, how can they perceive themselves as communicative learners? In other words, learners may have underdeveloped learning styles due to exterior circumstances. Teaching methodologies should thus include a wide variation of activities such as games, films, listenings, dictations, problem-solving, role-play and songs to name a few, in order to provide learners with different experiences, allowing them to possibly acquire new learning styles which could lead to becoming better language learners. Different activities also

take into consideration that people have multiple intelligences and may regularly use several intelligences at the same time (Puchta and Rinvoluceri, 2005:14).

## **2.4 Learning Strategies**

Closely related to learning styles are learning strategies, the specific devices or tactics used to facilitate the learning process and which vary according to each individual (Brown, 2007:132). According to Oxford (cited in Nunan, 1999:172) language learning strategies

- Contribute to the main goal, communicative competence
- Allow learners to become more self-directed
- Expand the role of teacher
- Are problem-orientated
- Are specific actions taken by the learner
- Involve many actions taken by the learner, not just the cognitive
- Support learning both directly and indirectly
- Are not always observable
- Are often conscious
- Can be taught
- Are flexible
- Are influenced by a variety of factors

According to Nunan (1999:171), the knowledge of strategies is essential as the more a learner knows about the processes implied in the acquisition of the language, the more involved they are in the learning process and thus become more effective in achieving the end results.

Strategies may be divided into different categories, three important categories being cognitive, metacognitive and socio-affective. Cognitive strategies are more directly related to learning activities or tasks used to promote the process of learning while metacognitive strategies are related to the learning process as it takes place - the planning, organising and monitoring of our comprehension and production (Richards and Lockhart, 1996:64) – and are important to develop reflection and flexibility and to learn how to combine cognitive and socio-affective strategies. Socio-affective strategies are non academic and involve stimulating learning by interacting with others. It includes

such factors as emotions and attitudes. A description of each of the strategies is provided in table 2.

**Table 2** – Description of Learning Strategies

<b>Cognitive strategies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Memorising techniques</li> <li>• Repetition to practice</li> <li>• Translation – using L1 as a basis for understanding in those aspects or systems that are similar – cognate words, grammatical patterns and rules</li> <li>• Grouping, reordering or classifying</li> <li>• Taking notes</li> <li>• Deduction</li> <li>• Recombination</li> <li>• Imagery</li> <li>• Auditory representation</li> <li>• Inferencing/prediction – using available information to guess meaning of new items or fill in missing information</li> <li>• Transfer – bring background knowledge (schema) to facilitate new learning task</li> </ul>
<b>Metacognitive strategies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Goal setting</li> <li>• Planning – which increased the likelihood of choosing an appropriate cognitive strategy to carry out task</li> <li>• Monitoring and evaluating the learning process and the best conditions to carry out the process</li> <li>• Being able to channel attention to specific aspects of language input</li> </ul>
<b>Socio-affective strategies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working with fellow students (cooperation) to obtain feedback and/or help clarify and solve problems.</li> <li>• Engaging in social interaction to model language to become a more effective learner</li> <li>• Asking questions</li> <li>• Providing self-encouragement</li> <li>• Dealing with anxiety</li> </ul>

(Brown, 2007:134-5 and Richards and Lockhart, 1996:63-5)

Some of the above strategies pertain to learning strategies which deal with the area of intake, retention, organisation and recall of information while others deal with verbal and non-verbal means to communicate the information. These may often be referred to as communicative strategies and in addition to those mentioned in the table may include *avoidance strategies* and *compensatory strategies* such as:

- not finishing a message or avoiding a subject matter or issue due to language difficulties
- using other words when the exact word is not known
- using ‘all purpose words’ – e.g. *stuff, thing*
- using a L1 word but with an English adaptation
- using prefabricated patterns
- asking for help ‘*What do you call...*’
- *pausing or stalling to gain time to think of a word e.g. well, un, now let’s see* (Brown, 2007:138)

The teaching of strategies should be included in the on-going process of language learning. Experience seems to suggest - and research confirms - that many learners are unaware of many learning strategies or do not know which strategies work best for them (Nunan, 1999:172-3). This would imply that there is an earnest need to ‘teach’ our learners how to learn. This may be true for language learning and for other content based areas. Teachers and other educational practitioners often wrongfully assume there is no need to spend time and effort in ‘preparing learners to “receive” the language’ or information (Brown, 2001:208) or are just too consumed in ‘teaching’ that they overlook these details. Learners should be presented and exposed to a number of diverse strategies and be allowed to experiment so that they may choose those that best fit their learning preferences and are most appropriate to a particular problem. Subsequently this will lead to higher motivation, as learners know what they have to do to tackle a task or problem. This also encourages learner autonomy and encourages students to become better language learners (Nunan, 1999: 83, 172).

Students in the training session were introduced to a variety of strategies both explicitly and implicitly. Within the socio-affective strategies, learners understood that learning could be promoted through interaction. They became aware of this through role-play and group work activities carried out in the classroom which allowed learners to practice what they most needed – oral communication to build their confidence in speech. Thornsbury (1996:282) states that communication initiated by students to negotiate meaning promotes learner involvement. It would seem to lead to more learning as students are paying attention and are more responsible for the activity, transforming the activity into a student-centred task which promotes cooperative

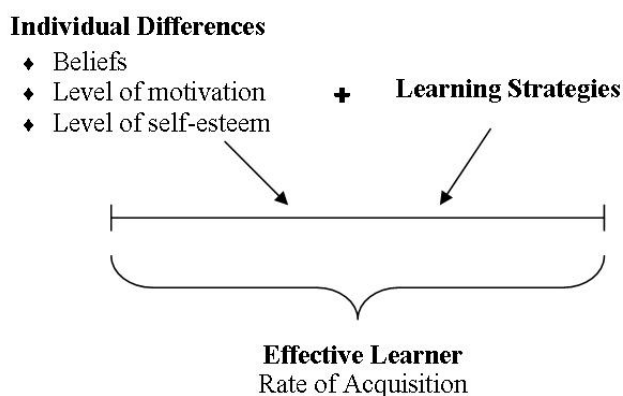
learning. This may explain why toward the end of the course the suggestion to speak English in their department was made. Providing students with metacognitive approaches allowed them to review and plan their progress. They learned that with some pre-planning of telephone conversations, they could feel more confident in their task and lower their anxiety before they initiated a call. They also understood that they could breakdown the language into more manageable parts which allowed them to categorise the language. As confidence grew, they were willing to tackle more complex tasks. Writing tasks were carried out through a process approach in which learners collaboratively completed tasks together, each one contributing some knowledge to the process, implying both socio-affective and metacognitive strategies. As fixed expressions, patterns and collocations were introduced, students' awareness was raised to the feasible partnership between words and this helped them to make use of the language they already knew and extend it. In addition, students became aware of pragmatic issues in the language. The subsequent organisation and categorisation of new vocabulary, patterns also provided a scaffolding effect to assist the learning process. By drawing students' conscious attention to language form and patterns, the teacher is encouraging the learning process to continue and is promoting learner autonomy as they are demonstrating to students what they eventually have to master (Ellis and Hedge in Willis, 1997:42).

### **3. Conclusion**

Students from the training reported improvements in their listening and speaking skills, and stated that they had acquired quite a substantial amount of vocabulary which improved their writing, grammar and reading. All of the participants with the exception of the one who withdrew from the course stated they would like to attend other similar courses or alternatively, other courses with an emphasis on conversational skills (see Appendix II). It is clear then that the training course had been successful in changing some of the beliefs that students brought into the classroom and had increased students level of motivation and self-esteem.

There are many reasons that may account for learners' success, many of which are clearly related to motivation and determination (Brown, 2007). Learning and teaching go hand in hand as the teacher facilitates and/or guides the learning process. It is

essential for the teacher to be optimistic from the beginning in order to trigger responses from learners which may lead to better language learning. It is thus the opinion of the writer that learners may become better language learners when exposed to a variety of meaningful learning tasks and learning strategies that enhance their motivation, self-esteem and determination as I attempt to portray in figure 2.



**Figure 2** – Variables in effective learning

The teacher is thus establishing the bases for students to become autonomous learners, as they feel more comfortable to experiment with the language; they take responsibility for their learning and continue the learning process beyond the walls of the classroom. However, I would suggest that learning abilities improve on a continuum. Certain learners' achievement will be greater than others. It is not so much in having a greater ability than other students but due to the fact that different people interact in different ways with their environment and in the way that they understand and organise the information (Skehan, 1998).

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# Appendix 1

## Questionnaire

In order to help with other trainings and evaluate the effectiveness of this one, please provide detailed and honest answers to the following questions. All answers are confidential.

1. How did you feel in relation to this course and to English before you began?

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2. Did you attain the goals that were originally set out for the training course?

Yes No

Please provide one or more examples of the goals that you have attained.

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3. Has the training helped you become more confident in what you do at work in English?

Yes No

Please provide example(s)

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4. Has your attitude towards English changed in any way? Would you like to participate in more training courses in English in the future? Why?

Yes No

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5. During the training, I highlighted that there were patterns and fixed phrases in English both for written and spoken English

5.1 Did you know about the following before the training:

- |  |     |    |
|--|-----|----|
| ➤ verb + preposition ( <i>deal with</i> ) and other similar patterns | Yes | No |
| ➤ Frames – <i>a lot of / a number of</i>                             | Yes | No |
| ➤ Collocations – <i>make / negotiate / a deal</i>                    | Yes | No |
| ➤ Sequencing of pattern <i>look forward to verb+ing</i>              | Yes | No |
| ➤ Fixed expressions  | Yes | No |

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

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5.2 Has this helped you become more aware of patterns in English?                      Yes            No

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5.3 How has this knowledge helped you with comprehension /improved your English?

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5.4. During the training we discussed some learning and communicative strategies. Were any of them useful? Yes      No      Can you provide an example or two of the most useful ones?

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5.5 Have these strategies helped you? How have they helped you?

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

: \_\_\_\_\_

6. In which areas did you progress the most? Please tick the appropriate skills

Grammar \_\_\_\_\_            Vocabulary \_\_\_\_\_            Speaking \_\_\_\_\_

Listening \_\_\_\_\_            Reading \_\_\_\_\_            Writing \_\_\_\_\_  
(comprehension)

## Appendix 2

<p>Question 1</p> <p>How did you feel in relation to this course and to English before you began?</p>	<p>(1) I was looking forward to it – I wanted to practice my English because I feel uncomfortable when I speak</p> <p>(2) a bit nervous because my English is not too good, I make many mistakes– I don't like to speak in English but I need to</p> <p>(3) nervous because my boss told me to go – I hate to speak in English</p> <p>(4) I was very happy because it is an opportunity to practice my English. I feel uncomfortable when I speak in English but I have to do it.</p> <p>(5) nervous, I can write but I can no speak well, I have very little time to practice.</p> <p>(6) Very useful, I often go to conferences but never speak for fear of making mistakes</p> <p>(7) Happy because it is a good opportunity to learn new things as I speak on the phone every day</p> <p>(8) Very happy, I speak and write in English and I like English very much. In the past 2 years I have learned a lot because I use English every day and the course helped me more.</p> <p>(9) I like English very much but I have to learn a lot. The course is good because I have to speak to foreign people almost every day in English.</p> <p>(10) I think by English is too bad and I like to use English but I feel uneasy when I have to talk maybe because I don't use it everyday.</p>
<p>Question 2</p> <p>Did you attain the goals that were originally set out for the training course? Please provide one of more examples of the goals that you have attained</p>	<p><i>Yes = 10      No =</i></p> <p>(1) Yes, my writing and my speaking improved a bit and I feel more confident when I speak. I don't make as many mistakes as I thought. This training should be longer. Not enough time. I learned many useful new expressions in English and learned to look for more.</p> <p>(2) My understand and writing is much better to help me in professional activities. I learned many fixed phrases used in commercial English and I feel more confident when I give information to people. I know I need practice more, I know I can't translate everything from Portuguese to English.</p> <p>(3) Yes, my writing is better, I improved my vocabulary and learned new expressions that I am going to use at work. I can see where I make mistakes and I feel more confident when I use English in writing and speaking. The teacher motivated me.</p> <p>(4) The training helped a lot in my writing and correcting mistakes that came from direct translation from Portuguese and using words that were not very used in English like 'appendix' for 'attached'</p> <p>(5) Yes, it is easier for me to answer emails and understand them and I can analyse and understand other documents that we received much better.</p> <p>(6) I've noticed that my writing is more structured than it was and as we had to speak all throughout the lessons I feel more confident in what I say and that I can express my thoughts effectively</p> <p>(7) Yes, especially since the training was very practical and we had to speak, there was no way out. I can now write much better as we were provided with many examples of expressions commonly used</p>

	<p>in business English</p> <p><b>(8)</b> Yes, my writing is much better as we learned many expressions and patterns used in emails and letters example to complain, inquire etc and our speaking also improved with the role-plays of telephone conversation. Even though we did not do a lot of grammar work I think that I can apply my verb tenses more correctly.</p> <p><b>(9)</b> Yes, it is easier to talk to technicians and other people</p> <p><b>(10)</b> Yes, this training helped my in my phone conversations, in the structure of the emails and mainly in phrases usually used in letters, complaints, inquiries and other communications</p>
<p>Question 3</p> <p>Has the training helped you become more confident in what you do at work in English? Please provide example</p>	<p>Yes = <b>10</b> No =</p> <p><b>(1)</b> Yes, it is easier for me to talk and read</p> <p><b>(2)</b></p> <p><b>(3)</b> I feel more confident when I write something and I have started to speak on the phone with some of the suppliers</p> <p><b>(4)</b> I feel much more confident in my professional activities</p> <p><b>(5)</b> I have become more confident when I speak to technicians</p> <p><b>(6)</b> In my speaking</p> <p><b>(7)</b> Speaking and writing – because we have used a ‘hands-on’ approach, we have learned by doing.</p> <p><b>(8)</b> Without a doubt</p> <p><b>(9)</b> I don’t feel so scared to speak</p> <p><b>(10)</b> Because with this training I feel more trust/confidence</p>
<p>Question 4</p> <p>Has your attitude towards English changed in any way? Would you like to participate in more training courses in English in the future? Why?</p>	<p>Yes = 10 No =</p> <p><b>(1)</b> conversational classes</p> <p><b>(2)</b> another similar course – I need to practice more</p> <p><b>(3)</b> conversational classes to practice more</p> <p><b>(4)</b> Practice conversation and grammar</p> <p><b>(5)</b> Need more practice in speaking and listening</p> <p><b>(6)</b> this course should have been longer to get more oral practice</p> <p><b>(7)</b> conversational classes, they were interesting and it’s good to talk about many different topics</p> <p><b>(8)</b> conversational classes to practice more and learn new vocabulary</p> <p><b>(9)</b> conversational classes to continue to progress</p> <p><b>(10)</b> conversational classes to continue to progress to a higher level</p>
<p>Question 5.1</p> <p>During the training, I highlighted that there were patterns and fixed phrases in English both for written and spoken English</p>	<p>Did you know about the following before the training: verb + preposition (<i>deal with</i>) and other similar patterns <span style="float: right;">Yes = <b>4</b> No = <b>6</b></span></p> <p>Frames – <i>a lot of / a number of</i> <span style="float: right;">Yes = <b>0</b> No = <b>10</b></span></p> <p>Collocations – <i>make / negotiate / a deal</i> <span style="float: right;">Yes - <b>2</b> No - <b>8</b></span></p> <p>Sequencing of pattern <i>look forward to verb+ing</i> <span style="float: right;">Yes - <b>6</b> No - <b>4</b></span></p> <p>Fixed expressions <span style="float: right;">Yes - <b>4</b> No - <b>6</b></span></p> <p>Comments:</p> <p><b>(1)</b> I only knew some expressions very vaguely, the course has helped to acquire many more and became more aware of them</p> <p><b>(4)</b> I knew some fixed expressions but I am able to apply them more</p>

	<p>frequently now and have learned many more that I never knew existed or that I never noticed before the training</p> <p>(7) I only knew a few fixed expression from my writing but had no knowledge of patterning in grammar</p> <p>(8) I only knew a few fixed expressions</p> <p>(10) I only knew very common fixed expressions but had no idea of collocations or sequencing of patterns which I find very useful</p>
<p>Question 5.2</p> <p>Has this helped you become more aware of patterns in English?</p>	<p><i>Yes = 10 No = 0</i></p>
<p>Question 5.3</p> <p>How has this knowledge helped you with comprehension/improve your English?</p>	<p><i>Comments:</i></p> <p>(1) I have learned to look ahead of the words I do not understand, actually read to the end of the sentences to try to understand the meaning and at the same time look for expressions. Many times I can understand the meaning without having to look in the dictionary. It is very different from how I learned at school. We just fill in gaps and read texts.</p> <p>(2) easier to write without making so many mistakes and it doesn't take me so long to write a sentence or idea</p> <p>(3) I know that I am getting my message across correctly and I can try to write longer more complex sentences</p> <p>(4) My correspondence is more structured and I don't use strange words like before</p> <p>(5) I am slowly learning more in English and want to learn more</p> <p>(6) I feel that I am more fluent</p> <p>(7) I am more aware of expression that exist in business English and I can transmit my ideas correctly</p> <p>(8) Better understanding and I have learned a lot of new vocabulary</p> <p>(9) It is becoming easier to talk in English</p> <p>(10) I am applying new vocabulary and phrases in my communication</p>
<p>Question 5.4</p> <p>During the training we discussed some learning and communicative strategies. Were any of them useful? Can you provide an example or two of the most useful ones?</p>	<p><i>Yes = 10 No = 0</i></p> <p>(1) Classifying, inferencing from other words and context, prefabricated patters</p> <p>(2) Recombination, working with other people</p> <p>(3) dealing with anxiety on the phone by planning ahead, prefabricated patterns</p> <p>(4) prefabricated patterns, planning before calling someone</p> <p>(5) grouping and classifying, recombination</p> <p>(6) inferencing from other words and context</p> <p>(7) prefabricated patterns, planning before speaking on the phone, similarities between English and Portuguese</p> <p>(8) inferencing from other words, recombination, planning before writing</p> <p>(9) prefabricated words, planning</p> <p>(10) inferencing from other words, prefabricated patterns(</p>

<p>Question 5.5</p> <p>Have these strategies helped you? How have they helped you?</p>	<p>(1) Yes - I don't have to use the dictionary so often when the texts are more complicated. My comprehension is better</p> <p>(2) Yes - I ask other people for help more now</p> <p>(3) Yes -</p> <p>(4) Yes my letters and calls are more organised</p> <p>(5) Yes – Keeping a notebook for expressions and new vocabulary is very good</p> <p>(6) better understanding of texts</p> <p>(7) better organised with my learning</p> <p>(8) better organised with new vocabulary and expressions</p> <p>(9) Yes</p> <p>(10) better organised with new vocabulary and better understanding of some words</p>
<p>Question 6.</p> <p>In which areas did you progress the most? Please tick the appropriate skills</p>	<p>Listening = 8 ticks (Comprehensions)</p> <p>Vocabulary = 7 ticks</p> <p>Speaking = 7 ticks</p> <p>Writing = 4 ticks</p> <p>Grammar = 3 ticks</p> <p>Reading = 2 ticks</p>