

# ESL: Students' learning difficulties and strategies

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This paper aims to investigate the difficulties faced by students in learning English as a second language and the strategies that they use to overcome these difficulties. The data was obtained from a total of seven respondents who were interviewed by the researchers using semi-structured interview questions. The respondents were selected after administering an informal language test for reading, writing and listening skills in English among 77 students who enrolled for courses in institutions of higher learning in Malaysia. The analysis of the responses to the interviews was done using the process of topic ordering, to describe the process of preparing qualitative data for analysis. Using this process the transcripts were analyzed inductively. It was found that the students were reluctant speakers of the English language. They were dependent on their teachers to teach them the language and did not seem to have the desire to learn the language on their own. They were found to be overly concerned about their performance in examinations. Therefore, they did not seem to enjoy the process of learning English but were carrying out the task because they are required to do so. The strategies used by the students were also not effective in helping them learn the language. They perceived memorization as an effective tool to help them learn the use of strategies like visualization, translation and note taking did not help them. This study found that students did not perceive that the strategies they used were ineffective and have continuously used them.

Keywords: ESL learning difficulties, ESL learning strategies