

Are you a successful language learner?

Time	20-40 minutes
Interaction	pairs
Level	A2 (Pre-intermediate) to B2 (Upper Int.)

Language areas practised

Sub-skills and Functions

- describing activities and actions
- reporting and evaluating comments

Grammar and Lexis

- language learning
- reported speech (optional)
- reporting verbs (optional)

Preparation

Photocopy the main worksheet (next page – 1 per student), and the answer key (1 per pair).

Procedure

1. Begin with a brief discussion on language learning. You could get learners to discuss the following 2 questions in pairs, followed by feedback:

- How successful are you at learning languages?
- Do you think that language learning is a matter of natural talent or hard work? Why?

2. Explain the activity. Tell the students that they will discuss 6 common language learning situations in pairs. They should take brief notes on their partner's ideas. Advise them to think of as many ideas as possible, as they may score marks for each idea. Even if they agree, they should take separate notes.

3. Hand out the worksheet (1 per student), and look at the first situation as an example with them. Elicit 1 or 2 ideas without confirming how good they are. Let them continue in pairs. Monitor as appropriate.

4. When pairs finish, check that their notes are detailed enough and hand out copies of the answer key. Read through the instructions and check that they understand that they score points for anything they mentioned that is in the answer key, even if they didn't take notes on it.

Idea: If you like, you can tell them that if they mentioned something that they think is a good idea but isn't in the answer key, they can ask you. If you agree it's a good idea, you can award bonus points!

5. After pairs have calculated their partner's score, get them to check what it means in the box at the bottom of the worksheet. Emphasise, especially if their scores are low, that they can improve by doing more of the 'Good ideas' in future. Success in language learning is more about strategies, hard work and motivation, and less about natural talent.

6. If there is time at the end, learners often enjoy critically evaluating the validity of these kind of quizzes. They may feel that there are ideas missing from the key, disagree with the ratings, or the interpretation of the scores. While the quiz is based partly on the research evidence (see Rebecca Oxford's work on this, such as *Language Learning Strategies: What Every Teacher Should Know*. 1990. Heinle & Heinle), it's also based partly on my personal experience as a language teacher and learner, so it's OK for them and you to disagree!

Are you a successful language learner?



Work in pairs. Discuss what you would do in the following situations. Make brief notes on your partner's answers in the box on the right. You can agree or disagree, but be honest!

Situation	Your partner's ideas
1. Your teacher gives you a difficult text to read with five comprehension questions to answer. It includes lots of words you don't know. You have a dictionary. What do you do?	
2. You are in a cafe and someone introduces you to a British friend called Helen. She speaks very fast, and you can't understand what she says. What do you do?	
3. Your teacher gives you a speaking activity to do in pairs. There are 3 questions and you have 5 minutes. You have to talk about your family. What do you do?	
4. Your teacher is giving you lots of new vocabulary every day, and you are finding it difficult to learn all the words. What do you do?	
5. Your teacher gives you a difficult grammar exercise from the coursebook. Then she asks you to check your answers in pairs. You and your partner have very different answers. What do you do?	
6. You are finding listening particularly difficult in your English lessons. Fortunately you have one hour free every day for practice. What do you do with this time?	

Your teacher will give you the answer key when you've finished. Use it to score your partner's answers. Then check what your score means below. Do you agree with the interpretation?

Your score	What it means
below 0	Hmm... It looks like you need some help with language learning. Read the Good ideas in the answer key and try them out. The good news is - there is definitely plenty of room for improvement!
0-5	Not bad. You have <i>some</i> good ideas, but you can definitely improve on these. Try the good ideas in the answer key, and ask your teacher for help on any areas where your score was low.
6-10	Good stuff. You are learning well, but review the areas where you didn't score so well carefully. Why not try out some of the highest scoring Good ideas? Find out if anyone else in the class can help you too!
11-15	Great work! You are probably learning quickly and effectively, but there is still a little room for improvement. Try out some of the top ideas below, and don't be scared to experiment with new strategies.
over 15	Wow! You are an expert language learner. You may even be able to give your classmates some help. But don't rest on your laurels; keep trying new ideas to improve even more.



Are you a successful language learner? – Answer key

Using the notes you took to help you, score your partner's answers using the following answer key. You can score your partner for more than one answer in the key. For example, if s/he mentioned 2 of the good ideas, she can score points for both of them. However, if s/he mentioned a good idea and a bad idea, you will need to both add and subtract points to the total (+3 and -2 = +1):

1	Good ideas	Focus on trying to answer the comprehension questions.	3
		Identify the most important word that you don't know and either check these in a dictionary or try to guess the meaning from context.	2
		Read it quickly first to get the general meaning.	1
	Bad ideas	Tell the teacher it's too difficult.	-1
		Check every difficult word in your dictionary.	-2
Copy the answers from another student.		-3	
2	Good ideas	Stop her politely whenever you don't understand something and ask her to explain it.	3
		Ask her regular questions to stop her from controlling the conversation too much.	2
		Ask her to speak more slowly.	1
	Bad ideas	Nod your head and pretend you understand.	-1
		Use the translator on your mobile phone whenever she says something you don't understand.	-2
Tell her you can't understand her and walk off.		-3	
3	Good ideas	Listen to your partner carefully AND/OR make notes on her/his answers.	3
		Try to use any new vocabulary that you have learned recently.	2
		Make brief notes before starting.	1
	Bad ideas	Write down all your answers before speaking.	-1
		Try to finish as quickly as possible.	-2
Try to talk directly to the teacher, not your partner.		-3	
4	Good ideas	Meet together with classmates in your free time to learn the vocabulary.	3
		Test yourself on the new vocabulary for a few minutes every day.	2
		Ask the teacher for advice at the end of the lesson.	1
	Bad ideas	Highlight all the words with a yellow pen.	-1
		Wait and hope that you will remember the words tomorrow.	-2
Complain to the school director/manager.		-3	
5	Good ideas	Discuss the differences carefully with your partner.	3
		Check the grammar reference in the coursebook to help you find the right answer.	2
		Check the instructions to the exercise carefully to make sure you both understood.	1
	Bad ideas	Look at the answers of another student.	-1
		Compare your answers, but don't change anything.	-2
Ask the teacher for help (You're meant to be checking in pairs.).		-3	
6	Good ideas	Download podcasts for language learners and listen to them regularly.	3
		Watch short YouTube videos twice or more, checking the difficult bits carefully.	2
		Get a copy of the listening tracks from the coursebook or workbook, and listen to them several times, using the tapescript to help you understand.	1
	Bad ideas	Listen to your favourite songs in English and memorise the lyrics.	-1
		Watch Hollywood movies in English (The fast speed of speech makes them very difficult, rather unnatural and they often have surprisingly limited vocabulary.)	-2
Study grammar or vocabulary.		-3	