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Successful and Unsuccessful English Learners: the use of learning strategies as an indicator of L2 (lack of) success

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Abstract

The present study explores the comparison between successful and unsuccessful learners concerning several individual differences such as personality, motivation, language learning beliefs, use of learning strategies and preferred learning styles. Sixteen intermediate level English learners from a language school participated in the study. They were classified into either successful or unsuccessful according to their teachers' perceptions, their class performance and their marks in their exams at the language school they were attending. The participants completed a four-week diary and answered three questionnaires which allowed the researcher to establish similarities and differences between the two groups. The main findings suggest that success in the acquisition of a foreign language can be explained in terms of high motivation, high amount of time devoted to learning outside the school setting, the necessary and effective use of learning strategies, personality and positive language learning beliefs. The findings also imply that the different factors may be mutually correlated. Finally, pedagogical implications are discussed so as to improve the current teaching methodology.

Key words: Successful English learner, Unsuccessful English learner, Individual differences (IDs), learning styles, learning strategies, language learning beliefs.

1. Introduction

Individual differences (IDs) among second and foreign language learners and differences in their success have been topics of great interest among Second Language Acquisition (SLA) researchers. IDs have been referred to as "dimensions of enduring personal characteristics that are assumed to apply to everybody and on which people differ by degree" (Dörnyei, 2006: 42). Some of the factors that may motivate those differences are age, aptitude, beliefs, socio-psychological factors (motivation and attitude), personality, cognitive style and use of learning strategies.

Variation among learners may occur in second as well as in first language acquisition, but, the success in the acquisition of a second language is far more variable than in the acquisition of the mother tongue. That is to say, whereas L1 learners achieve full competence (except in specific cases), not all learners of an L2 reach the level that they aimed to achieve.

Learners who apparently receive the same amount of input and learn a second language in similar circumstances can undergo many differences regarding their language learning process and their ultimate level of competence. Taking the previous statement into consideration, this study sets out to explore if there are identifiable differences and similarities among more effective and less effective English learners, regarding their motivation, personality, beliefs, learning styles and use of learning strategies. Moreover, it seeks to observe whether the use of learning strategies might be a predictor of language success. Therefore, the research questions that guided this study are the following:

(1) Are there identifiable differences between successful and unsuccessful learners regarding factors such as beliefs, motivation, personality, learning styles and use of learning strategies?

(2) Does using learning strategies ensure success in the acquisition of the foreign language?

According to previous research (Halbach, 2000; Mori, 1999; Gan, Humphreys and Hamp-lyons, 2004; Wong and Nunan, 2011), the main hypothesis is that there are relevant differences between more and less effective English learners regarding their motivation, beliefs, personality, learning styles and use of learning strategies. Based on the same studies, we also hypothesise that an effective use of learning strategies is an indicator of success in the target language.

In order to answer the research questions, this research study analysed sixteen intermediate level English students, eight of whom are considered successful English learners and the remaining eight are considered unsuccessful. The classification of the students into successful and unsuccessful learners was done through observation of their class performance, teachers' perceptions and exam results. The collection of data was done by means of different instruments: a four-week diary, three questionnaires and email correspondence.

The present study is organised into five sections. Section 2, presents a theoretical framework to the study which includes two different subsections: the first subsection discusses the most relevant IDs for this study and the second one reviews and analyses some studies conducted on this topic. The methodology of the study is presented in section 3. Sections 4 and 5 introduce, analyse and discuss the results obtained from the study. Finally, pedagogical implications are presented and conclusions are drawn in section 6.

2. Literature Review

The literature review has been divided into two sections. The first section focuses, defines and classifies some IDs relevant to this study: beliefs, personality, motivation, learning styles and learning strategies. The second section reviews previous research on the differences between more and less effective language learners.

2.1 Individual Differences (IDs)

As it has been previously stated, IDs in language learning have been a focus research over the last decades. The aim of most of this previous research has been to give a coherent and complete explanation to the reasons for the multiple differences regarding the learning process and the ultimate level of competence of learners of the same language who have received the same amount of input in similar learning contexts. As Dörnyei (2009) stated, "Individual Differences have usually been seen as background learner variables that modify and personalize the overall trajectory of the language acquisition process" (p. 231). Similarly, Dörnyei and Skehan (2003) had claimed that these IDs are predictors of language learning success. A brief description of each of the IDs which are relevant in the present study is provided below.

2.1.1 Beliefs

Beliefs about language learning were defined as "opinions on a variety of issues and controversies related to language learning" (Horwitz, 1987: 120). The beliefs that students have towards the target language are considered a relevant characteristic which may have an impact on their learning process and their success. Therefore, each student has his/her own strong beliefs regarding L2 usefulness, its learning difficulty, the

process of its acquisition, the usefulness of certain learning strategies, etc. Learners' thoughts may as well have a strong correlation with the experiences that they have faced during the learning process of the target language. Moreover, these beliefs may also influence on the choice of learning strategies and the frequency of their use. This was observed in Oxford (1994), who claimed that "attitudes and beliefs have been reported to have notable effect on L2 learners' strategy use, with negative attitudes and beliefs resulting in poor strategy use" (Oxford, 1994, cited in Gabillon, 2005: 241).

2.1.2 Personality

Related to beliefs, personality is considered another relevant individual characteristic which causes variability in second or foreign language success. People with varying personality may interpret and perceive language learning differently. There are many personality traits in which people tend to differ. Whether they are introvert or extrovert, risk-taking, open to experience or self-confident might have an impact on their learning process and their ultimate level of competence. Nonetheless, all these characteristics tend to be generalized and to correlate with each other. For example, one of the conclusions in Liu's study was that "correlational analyses indicated that personality traits, self-esteem, language class risk-taking and sociability were generally significantly correlated with one another" (Liu, 2012: 46) which might suggest the best characteristics to be successful in the learning of a second or foreign language. That is to say, the correlation between different personality traits seems to be observable since in general, learners with high esteem tend to be more risk-taking and extrovert which help them to improve and fastener their learning process. Therefore, it has usually been

observed that extroversion, openness to experience and control of learning situations have correlation with higher levels of success among learners.

2.1.3 Motivation

Motivation is considered one of the most relevant individual differences that determine learners' success while learning a second or foreign language. Motivation refers to "the desire to initiate L2 learning and the effort employed to sustain it" (Ortega, 2009: 168). In the late 1950s, Gardner and Lambert developed the model of L2 learning motivation. Motivation is quantified via three dimensions: *motivational intensity, attitudes towards learning the L2* and *desire to learn (*Ortega, 2009) and there are several variables (antecedents) that contribute to increase or decrease the quantity of motivation.

The most relevant antecedent is integrativeness defined as "a genuine interest in learning the second language in order to come closer to the other language community" (Gardner, 2001: 5). At the same time, this antecedent involves three dimensions: *favourable attitudes towards L2 speakers, general interest in foreign languages and low ethnocentrism* and *integrative orientation.* In the same study, Gardner pointed out that the most facilitative form of motivation is *integrative motivation* which is only achieved when integrativeness is high, the attitude towards learning situation is positive and motivation quantity is high.

Orientation is considered another relevant antecedent which determines motivation. It is referred to the reasons that the learner has for learning the second or foreign language. There are considered to be five orientations for learning an L2: *instrumental, knowledge, travel, friendship* and *integrative.*

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Furthermore, *attitude* towards the second language can be considered another factor influencing motivation. Gardner et al. (1999) cited in Ortega (2009) carried out a study in which they observed that attitudes in high school were related with motivation, integrativeness and anxiety during college. Some indirect associations were also found between high-school and college attitudes towards bilingualism and self-perceptions of competence in communication.

The more modern research on motivation began in 1990s. Research moved from *quantity* of motivation and *antecedents* of integrativeness to *quality* of motivation. At that point, researchers tried to expand existing research to different contexts. Moreover, more modern views have drawn the conclusion that motivation is a dynamic term, not static. Therefore, researchers have taken into account the context, time, and behaviour of students when collecting data.

Finally, it has been observed that the learning contexts may have a relevant influence on motivation. Positive attitudes towards the learning context, L2 community and culture, satisfaction with instruction and teachers can influence the level of motivation. In addition, motivation changes and L2 learning success are considered reciprocal since motivation may lead to success in the process of learning and, at the same time, success can lead to motivation.

Therefore, motivation is considered to come from different sources and purposes. The purposes can be integrative or instrumental and the sources can be intrinsic or extrinsic. Nevertheless, a learner guided by integrative motivation can wish to learn the second or foreign language for personal enrichment (intrinsic) or because someone else wants him/her to learn it for an integrative reason (extrinsic).

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Moreover, a learner guided by instrumental motivation may wish to achieve practical goals using the second language (intrinsic) or for practical purposes (extrinsic). [1]

2.1.4 Learning styles

The term learning style is usually defined as "an individual's natural, habitual and preferred way of absorbing, processing and retaining new information and skills" (Kinsella, 1995: 171).

In 1994, Willing identified four major styles; *communicative, analytical, authority-oriented* and *concrete*. *Communicative* students like to learn by watching television, listening to native speakers and having conversations. These learners are characterized as active, autonomous and field independent. *Analytical* students like studying grammar, using English books and reading newspapers. Moreover, they like studying alone and finding their own mistakes. On the contrary, *authority-oriented* students prefer their teachers to explain everything and having their own textbooks containing their own full and clear explanations and notes. Finally, *concrete* students like games, pictures, films, videos, etc. Moreover, they also like using and practising the second language outside the school setting.

Oxford (1993) carried out a study on five different styles contrasts and found out that each of the styles contrast constitute a comparative style continuum. Moreover, it is relevant to study the learning styles that learners prefer the most in order to help them choose the appropriate learning strategies. This statement can be observed in Oxford (1993): "Learners can take advantages of their learning styles by matching learning

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[1] It is relevant to acknowledge the new theory 'L2 Motivational Self System' proposed by Dörnyei (2009) which comprised the 'Ideal L2 Self', the 'Ought-to L2 Self' and the 'L2 Learning Experience'. Nevertheless, the results of this study are not accounted for within that theory.

strategies with their styles; similarly, learners can compensate for the disadvantages of their learning styles to balance their learning by adjusting learning strategies" (Oxford, 1993, cited in Wong and Nunan, 2011:146).

2.1.5 Learning strategies

Related to learning styles, learning strategies are considered to play an important role in second or foreign language acquisition. Learning strategies were described by O'Malley and Chamot (1990) as "special thoughts or behaviours that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information" (p.1). In addition, Weinstein and Mayer (1986) established that the goal of strategy use is to "affect the learner's motivational or affective state, or the way in which the learner selects, acquires, organizes, or integrates new knowledge" (Weinstein and Mayer, 1986, cited in O'Malley and Chamot, 1990: 43).

According to Oxford (1990), language learning strategies could be classified into six groups; *cognitive, metacognitive, memory-related, compensatory, affective* and *social*. Furthermore, the author added that these strategies could be further classified as *direct* (involve language) and *indirect* (do not involve language). Nevertheless, some authors such as Chamot (1990) reduced the classification into three groups: *cognitive, metacognitive and socio-affective.*

Cognitive strategies make learners able to manipulate language in direct ways. That is to say, they entail manipulation or transformation of learning materials and are related to learning tasks (e.g. summarizing, analyzing language, etc). By using *metacognitive strategies* learners aim to have a complete control of the learning process. Therefore, learners think, plan, monitor and self-evaluate the learning process (e.g. take

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advantage from practice opportunities, pay attention, among others). *Memory-related strategies* are believed to help the learner link different items from the target language without necessarily understanding them (e.g. grouping, rhyming, etc.). Moreover, *compensatory strategies* help learners to balance missing knowledge of the target language (e.g. guessing meanings from context). As far as *affective* strategies are concerned, they are used to regulate the emotions and the level of motivation (e.g. self-encouragement and/or self-reward). Finally, by using *social strategies,* learners are benefit from interaction and understand the target culture through it (e.g. speaking with native speakers).

It is beneficial for students to use learning strategies which fit their learning styles. It is when learners are able to do so that they can benefit a lot from those strategies. Therefore, as Oxford (2003) stated, "these strategies become a really useful toolkit for active, conscious, and purposeful self-regulation of learning" (p.2).

2.2 Differences between successful and unsuccessful learners

Several studies have been conducted in order to have complete understanding of the IDs that motivate the failure or success that learners face while learning a second or foreign language. Most research has been done regarding the correlation between learning strategies' use and success (or lack of it) in the acquisition of the target language. Nonetheless, almost all IDs have been studied from quantitative and/or qualitative points of views (e.g. Mori, 1999; Halbach, 2000; Gan et al., 2004; Guilloteaux and Dörnyei, 2008; Gan, 2011; Wong and Nunan, 2011).

Each researcher uses specific learners' language levels and a certain number of participants as well as specific instrumentation in order to answer the research question(s) that guided his/her own study. For instance, Halbach (2000) used 12

students' diaries, which is considered a relatively small number. On the other hand, Guilloteaux and Dörnyei's study (2008) consisted of a large number of participants; 27 teachers (4 male-23 female) and 1381 students. Studies conducted by Wong and Nunan (2011), Gan et al. (2004) and Mori (1999) ranged from 18 to 110 participants. In her study, Halbach (2000) stated that it is difficult to generalize with a small sample of learners, but even with a small sample, everything reported by students should be considered of extreme importance. That is why, even with small samples, all studies conducted on that topic have reached several conclusions regarding the differences between the successful and unsuccessful learners.

The instruments used in order to have a complete answer to the research question(s) may also vary from one study to another. The most frequently used instruments are questionnaires, diaries, interviews, surveys and email correspondence. Each instrument might be more or less useful depending on the number of participants and on the question(s) that it aims to answer. Moreover, whereas some studies rely on only one instrument, other studies use a variety of them. For example, Halbach (2000) based her study on diaries from several students, whereas Gan et al. (2004) used interviews, diaries and email correspondence.

Some of the objectives that guided these reviewed studies were to "explore the structure of language learners' beliefs and the relationship between their beliefs and their performance" (Mori, 1999: 6), "asses how students made use of their opportunities to practice and learn English and what they considered important for their learning" (Halbach, 2000: 88), "observe any typical attitudinal differences between successful and unsuccessful tertiary-level Chinese EFL students" (Gan et al., 2004: 232), "examine empirically how teacher's motivational teaching practices affects his or her students'

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motivated learning behaviour" (Guilloteaux and Dörnyei, 2008: 58), "explore whether there are identifiable differences in learning styles, strategy preferences and patterns of practice and use between more effective and less effective learners" (Wong and Nunan, 2011: 148) and "investigate how the contextualized learner learning attitudes, strategies, and motivation might differentiate successful and unsuccessful learners" (Gan, 2011: 67). Therefore, by accomplishing those goals, the authors aimed to study and analyse the different IDs and observe to what extent they can influence on the learners' success when learning a second or foreign language. Moreover, authors are directed towards the understanding of the large number of differences between learners of the same language.

One of the most relevant differences between the two groups of students is the use of learning strategies. Halbach (2000) stated that more successful students use learning strategies more frequently and this is considered to have an impact on the ultimate level of competence of students, that is to say, their proficiency rates. Nonetheless, she added that it is difficult to conclude whether successful students use more learning strategies due to their high proficiency or whether high proficiency is achieved due to the use of learning strategies. Gan et al. (2004) and Gan (2011) also concluded that successful students report more use of learning strategies. The study carried out by Gan (2011) stated that successful learners used learning strategies that covered all the language skills, whereas unsuccessful learners reported fewer use of learning strategies, which did not correlate with their reported wish to improve. Thus, the fact of revealing fewer use of learning strategies, entails that less effective learners devote less time to the learning of the language outside the classroom setting than the more effective ones.

Taking learning styles into consideration, the study conducted by Wong and Nunan (2011) drew the conclusions that successful students prefer the communicative style, whereas the less effective learners are split between authority-oriented and communicative styles. That is to say, less effective students rely on their teacher's guidance, whereas more effective students prefer performing communicative activities.

Teaching styles have been reported to be one of the major factors which may have a direct influence on the students' beliefs, motivation and attitude. For example, in the study conducted by Gan et al. (2004), it was observed that the teaching style that the teacher was using was considered the main drawback by most of the unsuccessful learners. Moreover, although successful learners reported that they gained some knowledge, they also considered the course to be too rigid and traditional. That fact made unsuccessful learners feel less motivated and lose confidence on their possibility to improve.

Related to teaching styles and as far as motivation is concerned, Guilloteaux and Dörnyei conducted an experimental study in 2008. They aimed to observe the link between the teachers' motivational teaching practices and the students' motivated behaviour. They used a class observation scheme, a students' questionnaire and a post lesson teacher evaluation scale. It was concluded that when the teachers followed a dynamic and motivating teaching style, the students felt motivated and willing to learn the language. Therefore, the use of motivational strategies was reflected in students' motivational behaviour even in the case of rigid and traditional courses. However, those teachers who taught the language in an unfashionable and uninteresting way had unmotivated learners as a consequence. They concluded that the aim and goal of every

teacher should be to show motivation while teaching in order to engage students to feel motivated as well.

Therefore, motivated learners tend to have good expectations towards the language learning process, place a lot of effort and be persistent during the process. In addition, they usually carry out activities which contain well established goals and which enable them to enjoy their experiences with the foreign language. Conversely, some learners are characterized as unmotivated when they do not have stimulus and willingness to learn a second or foreign language. Moreover, due to their lack of motivation, they tend to devote very limited time to English outside the school setting and, therefore, the acquisition of the target language may result more difficult. Related to the previous statement, Gan (2011) suggested that "the students lacked a genuine concern with their academic performance, which would be detrimental to their investment in improving English" (p.79).

Finally, regarding beliefs and attitude towards the target language, in almost all studies both groups of learners believed the target language to be extremely important and necessary. Nevertheless, Wong and Nunan (2011) stated that unsuccessful students reported no need to continue learning, whereas successful students reported their objective to take more proficiency examinations. In addition, Mori (1999) analysed learners' beliefs about learning in general and about Japanese language learning in particular. Four dimensions of general learning were identified as well as six dimensions of language learning beliefs. The four dimensions of general learning were named as *quick learning*, *effort is a waste*, *certain knowledge* and *truth*. In addition, the six dimensions of language learning beliefs were named *risk-taking*, *Kanji is difficult*, *analytic approach*, *avoid ambiguity*, *Japanese is easy* and *single answer*. The author

concluded that the study detected belief dimensions relevant to language learning which had not been previously identified. Moreover, it was added that both groups of dimensions (epistemological belief and language learning) are independent constructs, which contributes to the existence of domain specific belief dimensions. Furthermore, it has been observed that epistemological beliefs are observable in the beliefs about language learning in particular in different ways: language learners' beliefs are transferred into the domain of language learning, learners' beliefs are related to their willingness to take risks while communicating in the L2 and learners who believe in quick learning tend to find language learning as an easy task. There seem not to be causal relations, but the author drew some conclusions. It was stated that students who freely make mistakes believe that the process of learning is gradual and that working hard is rewarded. Therefore, those who place a lot of effort seem not to be worried about making mistakes while learning an L2. In addition, the correlation between class performance and learners' beliefs seem to explain that both epistemological beliefs and language learning beliefs can account for the level of competence and achievement of the second or foreign language.

In conclusion, studying and analysing IDs is extremely relevant in order to maximise the effects of instruction and to account for the differences between learners of the same language. By observing the different IDs, some conclusions can be drawn regarding the extent to which they can have a relevant effect on the success and ultimate competence in the target language. Therefore, making comparisons between learners may be helpful to provide less successful learners with some tips to increase their use of learning strategies, to maximise the benefit of their learning opportunities and to increase their motivation. Finally, IDs, needs, beliefs and goals of students need to be

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taken into account while preparing lessons in a language course in order to ensure its usefulness.

3. Methodology

As indicated in the introduction, the goal of this study is to explore if there are identifiable differences and similarities between more effective and less effective intermediate level English learners regarding their personality, motivation, beliefs, learning style and use of learning strategies. The participating students were classified into either *successful* or *unsuccessful* in relation to their exam marks, teachers' perceptions and their in-class performance at the language school that they were attending. In addition, we also seek to observe whether using learning strategies ensure success in the acquisition of the foreign language. A four-week diary, three questionnaires and email correspondence were used to reach these objectives.

3.1 Participants

A total of 24 intermediate level students of English from a language school in Rubí took part in this study. At the time of the study the subjects were aged between 14 and 16 and all of them were taking an intermediate course in the language school. The average number of hours that the students were exposed to English in classroom-instructed settings was six, namely three hours at the language school and three hours as part of their regular secondary school hours. In addition, all of them had been attending lessons at the language school for at least three years and started learning English at school when they were five.

Firstly, the researcher asked five teachers who were teaching the same intermediate course to classify their students into either *successful* or *unsuccessful*

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concerning their exam marks and their class performance. Students getting marks above 8.5 were considered *successful* and students getting marks below 5 in their examinations were considered *unsuccessful*. From the total number of students, the ones who got marks between 5 and 8.5 were excluded from the study as they could not be placed in either of the groups. Therefore, at that point, twenty students met the characteristics to participate in the study; they were intermediate level students, aged between 14 and 16 (except for one who was 12) and got marks below 5 or above 8.5.

Once the twenty students were placed in one of the two groups, the researcher sent emails to the learners and their parents in order to encourage them to participate in the project and to explain to them what they were expected to do and to answer. Nonetheless, they were not told the real purpose of the study, but rather that the researcher wanted to observe and analyze the number of activities related to English that they carried out outside the school setting. After the invitation, a total amount of 16 students (8 *successful* and 8 *unsuccessful)* accepted.

Although the instructions, the diary template and the questionnaires were sent by email, the investigator met all the participants in order to explain what they were supposed to do and to ensure their understanding of the tasks. During this meeting, students were encouraged to ask questions and to send emails to the researcher to clarify any doubts that could appear while answering the questionnaires and/or the diary. The researcher attended more than one of the students' lessons to remind them of the tasks.

3.2 Instruments

As previously stated, several instruments were used in order to collect the data and for the researcher to have complete answers to the research questions. Three questionnaires, a four-week diary and email correspondence were used.

Questionnaires: the learners were given three different questionnaires in order to explore general ideas about the students' relationship with the English language and collect data from different situations such as before and after an English exam. Questionnaire 1 was designed to obtain a general view of the students' personality, beliefs, use of learning strategies and motivation towards the foreign language (see Appendix A). Questionnaire 2 was answered by the students before the end of term examination. They were asked questions regarding the methods and strategies that they had used in order to study for their English exam. Moreover, students were asked about their feelings before the exam (see Appendix B). Questionnaire 3 took place just after the end of term examination. The learners had to make self-reflections regarding the (in)effectiveness of the way they had studied for the exam and the changes that they would make for future examinations (see Appendix C). The three questionnaires contained both open and closed-ended questions. Moreover, in each questionnaire, several questions regarding the differences between the language school and the secondary school were included as their motivation or their beliefs could change from one setting to the other.

Diary: by using this instrument of data collection, the students were expected to answer several questions every day during four weeks concerning their thoughts and feelings about the activities related to English that they had carried out inside and outside the school setting (see Appendices D and E). The questions were classified into three groups: *in-class activities, outside the school setting* and *general considerations.* With the collection of the first group of questions, the researcher could observe the students' thoughts and feelings regarding the activities performed in class and the differences that they observed between secondary school and the language school activities. By having the students answer the second group of questions, the investigator

could analyse whether students performed activities on their own outside school time and whether the activities had clear established goals. Finally, the third group of questions was used to study the organization of lessons that students preferred the most (secondary school, language school or both) and the differences that they observed between the two settings. Moreover, students were asked about their progress in the learning process and the difficulties that they faced while learning the language.

Email correspondence: students were sent emails every week for the researcher to ensure that they were completing the diary. Whether they completed the diary every week or not gave more hints to the researcher onto the learning strategies that students used and the number of hours that they devoted to the learning of English outside the school setting. Moreover, this instrument helped students freely ask questions that appeared while answering the questions.

Concerning the language used in the questionnaires and the diary, the students were able to choose between answering them in Spanish/Catalan (their mother tongue) or in English. The objective of the researcher was to collect as much information as possible. Therefore, the participants were asked to choose the language by means of which they could express themselves better.

3.3 Data analysis

The present study collected qualitative data in order to build a complex picture of how certain IDs could account for the distinction between more or less effective learners. Comparisons between the *successful learners* group and the *unsuccessful learners* group were analyzed through the collection of answers to the questionnaires and the diaries.

All the answers to the questionnaires and the diaries were read, transcribed, analyzed in detail and classified into two groups according to whether they derived from successful or from unsuccessful learners. Afterwards, the responses were further classified into five dimensions, namely personality, motivational similarities and differences, beliefs towards the target language, report of learning strategies and preferred learning styles. Linguistic features and grammatical errors were not relevant to this study and therefore they were not analyzed. The data was organized into several categories of analysis according to the different IDs: beliefs, personality, learning strategies, learning styles and motivation.

In addition, the answers were expected to vary even between learners from the same group. The reason for this expectation is that each learner has individual characteristics which make them different from other students, although they may have similar learning progress and levels of competence. Nonetheless, even though the answers reported were different, they were guided towards common features. For example, different learners may report their high or low motivation in different ways, but the reporting of this level of motivation can still be perceived.

4. Results

4.1 Completion of diary and questionnaires and language used

On the one hand, the whole group of successful learners completed the diary and answered the three questionnaires. Nevertheless, three out of the eight successful learners completed the diary only during two weeks instead of four, as they were required. Another relevant difference is the language used in order to answer the questions. As previously stated, learners were able to choose the language by means of

which they could express themselves better. Six out of the eight successful learners used English in the diaries and questionnaires and only two of them used Catalan to answer the diary and English to answer the questionnaires.

On the other hand, the whole group of unsuccessful learners completed the three questionnaires, but not all of them completed the diary. That is to say, whereas the eight successful students answered the diary, only six unsuccessful students completed it. In addition, not all students who completed the diary did it during the four pre-established weeks. In other words, only one student worked on the diary for the four weeks and the other five ranged from two to three weeks. Furthermore, half of the students used Catalan and the other half used English while completing the diary. However, only one student answered the questionnaires in Catalan. It seemed that less effective learners used Catalan as it was difficult for them to convey their thoughts in English. Figures 1 and 2 show the number of students who completed the diary and the questionnaires and the language used in both instruments.
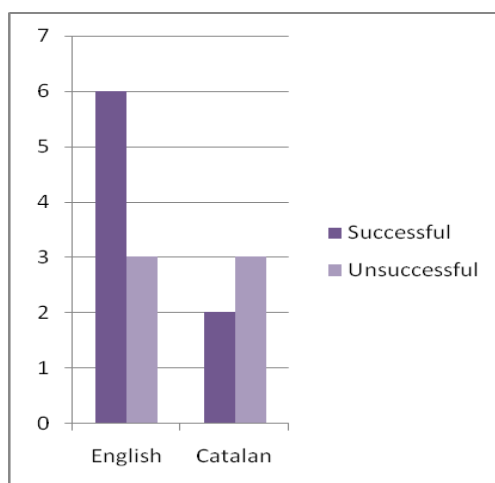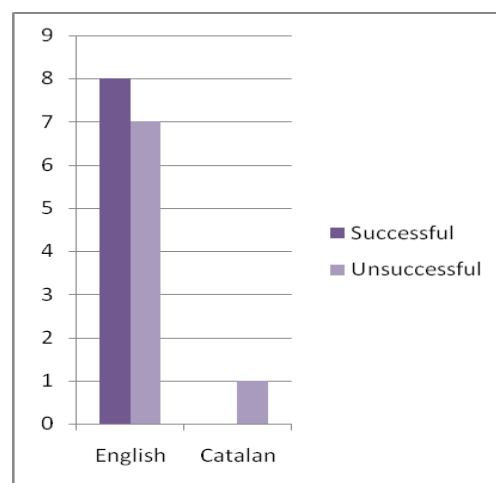
Figure 1: Diary

Figure 2: Questionnaires

4.2 Differences in the use of learning strategies between successful and unsuccessful learners

Successful learners

Through the analysis of the answers to the diary, it has been observed that taking all the successful learners as a group, they tend to carry out a high number of activities on their own related to English. Four out of the eight students reported doing activities on their own almost every day and the other four students reported carrying out activities from two to four days per week. In addition, the activities that they performed covered the four language skills. That is to say, by carrying out these activities they are able to practise receptive skills (i.e. *listening* and *reading*) and productive skills (i.e. *speaking* and *writing*). Furthermore, they seemed to benefit from all the learning opportunities that they faced.

The most common reported activities were mainly audiovisual; *listening to music in English* focusing on the lyrics of the songs and trying to translate them into their L1 and *watching films in English* in order to practise listening to native speakers. In addition, learners reported *doing the homework* every week for both the secondary school and the language school and *summarizing the most relevant information*, which helped them understand the new grammar and vocabulary better. Most of them did the homework while listening to music in English; therefore, they combined the two activities in order to make it more enjoyable. Another social strategy reported by several students was *talking to a friend in English.* Some of the learners who reported using this learning activity had pre-established objectives to achieve through its use: 'I talked in English with my friend in order to practise for the speaking exam' and others claimed that they used it just for pleasure. More precisely, one of the successful learners claimed

that she tried to benefit from all the speaking opportunities she had. Therefore, she always talked to her relatives who spoke English and to her teacher in English. Finally, six out of the eight students reported *reading blogs, books* or *news* at least once per week. They generally claimed that *reading English texts* helped them learn new vocabulary.

Unsuccessful learners

The use of learning activities and strategies among unsuccessful learners was less observed. Some of them reported doing some audiovisual activities related to English such as *listening to music in English* or *watching films,* but their performance was infrequent and it had not a pre-established goal such as *summarize the film* or *translate the song into their L1*. Unlike more effective learners, two out of the eight unsuccessful learners reported no use of learning strategies outside the school setting, not even doing the homework. Although most unsuccessful learners stated that learning English was difficult, they did not carry out the necessary number of activities on their own outside school and, consequently, they did not benefit from the learning situations. Therefore, whereas successful learners practised the four main language skills outside school, unsuccessful learners limited their practice mainly to listening. Moreover, the answers to the questionnaire before the exam showed that they studied far less time than successful learners.

Nevertheless, two of the unsuccessful learners who completed the diary for three weeks reported using several strategies quite frequently, although not as frequently as successful learners, which helped them improve three out of the four main skills. They stated that they *did their homework, listened to music in English, watched TV series* and *read books in English.* Therefore, although they reported doing several activities, they

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did not mention any performance related to *speaking*. One of them claimed that she did not enjoy speaking in English, because she was not good at it and she was very shy. In addition the two remaining students who completed the diary reported some strategies, but very randomly and inconsistently. They included *listening to music in English* and *watching TV series in English with Spanish subtitles.*

Another relevant issue is that the two students who reported a more frequent use of strategies and the remaining two who reported inconsistent use of learning strategies stated that they performed the activities without clear objectives behind them. That is to say, although some of them actually carried out activities, they were not aware of their benefits and their correlation with the improvement of language skills.

4.3 Differences in learning style preferences between successful and unsuccessful learners.

Successful learners

By analysing the learning strategies that successful learners tend to carry out outside the school setting and the clarifications that they made, it has been observed that the dominant learning style among the successful learners was 'communicative'. Most of them reported *watching TV* and *watching films* in English. In addition, four out of the eight students reported that they watched videos and benefited from all the listening opportunities, because although it was difficult for them to understand the messages of native people, they felt willing to improve their listening skills. Finally, some of them reported speaking in English with friends and three of them reported speaking in English to some of their relatives who could speak English.

In addition, the 'communicative' style was followed by the 'concrete' learning style. When learners were asked in their diaries what activities they enjoyed the most in

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their English lessons, some of them reported enjoying the games that they carried out in their language school. In addition, two of them claimed that one of the activities they enjoyed the most was describing pictures: 'The best activity, I think that it was the activity in which we had to describe a photo, because I love doing it!'. Therefore, it seems that they prefer learning by playing games, describing pictures, watching videos and films and listening to native speakers.

Finally, the concrete style was followed by the 'analytical' style. Some learners stated that the best activities were the ones related to grammar; 'I think that the best activity was to do an activity about the grammar that we had learnt, because I have it well done and it was a funny activity' and 'The best activity, I think that it was the photocopy of the passive voice because it helped me to understand better this grammar'.

Unsuccessful learners

As previously stated, the use of learning strategies was less observed among the unsuccessful learners' group. Therefore, by observing the questionnaires and the diaries it was seen that the strategies that this group reported could be analysed as belonging to the 'concrete style' as they were mainly *watching TV, watching movies and videos and playing games.* In addition, some instances could be analysed as belonging to the 'communicative style' such as *listening to native speakers*, but as it was observed, they did not tend to like *having conversations* as they considered they were not good at speaking.

Nevertheless, as the researcher found no instances in the diaries neither in the questionnaires of the unsuccessful learners as preferring the 'authority-oriented' style, it was decided to ask the students' teachers whether the eight unsuccessful learners liked their teacher to explain everything and having their own textbooks containing their full

and clear explanations and notes. The perceptions of the teachers were that only four out of the eight students preferred the 'authority-oriented learning style'. In addition it was claimed that sometimes these students took notes and seemed to be attentive, but they did not do well in their exams and in their performance since they limited their study to attending class and they did not benefit from their notes outside the class. The remaining four students were described as inattentive and unmotivated. Their teachers claimed that they only paid attention in class when they did games or when they did activities related to videos. Therefore, they were analysed as preferring the 'concrete learning style'.

4.4 Differences in motivation between successful and unsuccessful learners.

While answering the questionnaires, both groups of learners claimed that English was of extreme usefulness and necessity. Nevertheless, some differences appeared between the two groups while answering whether they were interested in increasing their knowledge.

Successful learners

Most successful learners claimed that they would like to speak English more fluently, learn more vocabulary and increase their knowledge. These were the answers that received a four/five on a five-point scale, meaning that they thought about these statements very frequently (i.e. 'almost always'). Only one of the students claimed that he thought about these statements sometimes, that is to say, these statements received a three on a five-point scale on this occasion. The fact of having limited vocabulary and not being very fluent did not discourage them, but helped them carry out more activities in order to improve those skills in which they had a lower level. One of the successful learners claimed that it was very difficult for her to understand what native people say;

therefore, as she was interested in it, she decided to perform activities such as watching TV series in their original version to improve her listening skills.

Another relevant fact was the enjoyment and motivation that learners faced while attending classes at the language school and at their secondary school. The majority of members of the successful learners' group claimed that they did not enjoy the English lessons in their secondary school, but they did enjoy them at the language school. Some of them pointed out that in the language school the lessons were more dynamic and that they followed activities and books appropriate to their level. One of the main drawbacks at their secondary school was the general low level. In addition, some learners stated that they did not like the lessons at their secondary school due to the fact that they were constantly repeating the same. In addition, one of the students reported that the worst aspect about English lessons at school was that the English teacher did not have a good command of the English language and, consequently, they could not learn as well as in the language school. Nevertheless, two of the successful learners reported that they did similar content in both schools and that they were as well split into level groups in their secondary school.

Finally, it is necessary to highlight that it was not always the case that students reported not enjoying their English lessons at their secondary school. Some of them enjoyed the lessons when the teacher managed to do it more dynamically, when they carried out online activities or when they carried out activities related to relevant festivities. At the same time, learners did not always report enjoyment of the English lessons at the language school. Therefore, they seemed to be guided according to the preparation of the lessons and the appropriate use of engaging activities.

Unsuccessful learners

As previously stated, the variation among successful and unsuccessful learners appeared when they were asked how frequently they thought about their desire to increase their knowledge and vocabulary and to be more fluent. Although three out of the eight unsuccessful learners had similar responses to the ones provided by the successful learners (i.e. four/five on a five-point scale), the remaining five unsuccessful learners reported that they did not think about it very frequently (i.e. two/three on a five-point scale, meaning 'almost never/sometimes').

In addition, contrarily to successful learners, the majority of learners in this group claimed that, it was very frequent for them to think about the statement 'I am only interested in passing my exams'. Therefore, it seemed that they were more guided by instrumental rather than integrative motivation.

The enjoyment of the English lessons at their secondary school and at their language school was considered of high relevance. Similarly to successful learners, the majority of unsuccessful learners claimed that they did not enjoy their lessons at their secondary school as they were constantly repeating the same and the lessons were based on doing exercises. Nevertheless, their enjoyment of the English lessons at their language school was not very frequent either. They said that the lessons were different as they carried out a variety of activities in the language school and they were not as monotonous as in school and they were better organized. Nevertheless, the number of instances in which they reported enjoyment of the lessons was lower than the ones reported by the successful learners. However, taking the students in isolation, three of them reported quite frequent instances of their enjoyment of the lessons at their language school.

Furthermore, as previously stated in the learning style section, the researcher asked the teachers for their perceptions about this group of learners. Four out of the eight unsuccessful learners were considered to be inattentive and unmotivated. Therefore, they showed no willingness to learn English and showed a negative attitude which, from the point of view of their teachers at the language school, could be due to their negative learning experiences at their secondary school.

4.5 Personality differences between successful and unsuccessful learners.

Successful learners

Taking the successful learners as a group, they tend to be self-confident and rely on their own ideas. Five out of the eight students reported not being nervous before an exam or when the teacher asks questions. Nevertheless, four of the students reported that they kept reviewing for the exam until the last minute. Moreover, the whole group reported enjoying giving their opinions and doing oral presentations. Although some of them claimed that they were afraid of making mistakes, the majority stated that they are attending lessons in order to improve and that the only way of improving is by making mistakes. They also expressed that they did not feel nervous when they had to speak to someone in English.

When asked about what type of working arrangement they preferred, the answers reveal that most of them preferred working alone. Some of the reasons to that answer were 'I think that when I'm alone I can work better. It doesn't mean I hate work in pairs, I love it', 'I like to work alone because I can use my ideas. In pairs is ok, but I don't like to work in group' and 'Because if I work alone I can concentrate more'. Therefore, most of them showed their self-confidence and their reliance on their own ideas. Moreover, the question related to whether they shared their knowledge before an

exam or not was also crucial in order to observe their personality. Only one of the learners from this group reported sharing her knowledge. That is to say, she tends to review the exam with her classmates by explaining to them what she has learnt.

Unsuccessful learners

Contrarily to the successful learners' group, the unsuccessful students as a whole tend to show shyness and insecurity. Five out of the eight unsuccessful learners pointed out in their questionnaires that they felt nervous before an exam and that they kept reviewing until the last minute. In addition, these students who reported nervousness before an exam and some others claimed that they tend to be nervous when the teacher asks them something, when they have to do oral presentations and when they have to speak to someone in English. Only one of the students claimed that she was not afraid of making mistakes since she considers it to be something usual while learning.

In relation to working preferences, most of them stated they preferred working in pairs or groups rather than working alone. Some of the reasons to these answers were 'Because in pairs or groups you can split the project and I prefer it' and 'I prefer working in pairs, because you can split the work because in groups two people work and the rest don't and work alone I don't like because I'm very shy'. Doing role-plays was also considered one of the unsuccessful learners' preferred activities. One of the students added the reasons why she answered that she preferred doing role-plays 'Because I think doing games we practice English (Oral) and we have a good time'. Therefore, most of them showed their lack of self-confidence and their lack of enjoyment when working alone. Finally, in relation to the question of whether they shared their knowledge before an exam or not, they reported similar answers as

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unsuccessful learners since only one of them reported sharing her knowledge before an exam.

4.6 Differences in language beliefs between successful and unsuccessful learners.

As previously stated, each learner has his/her own beliefs regarding L2 usefulness, its learning difficulty, the process of its acquisition and the usefulness of certain learning strategies. Therefore, having analysed both the diaries and the questionnaires, it has been observed that there are differences between both groups as well as differences between the members of the two groups.

Successful learners

As previously stated, the whole group of successful learners stated that it is very useful to learn English. In addition, they reported desire to be more fluent and learn more vocabulary. Some of these learners mentioned that English is very relevant, necessary and useful for the future. Conversely, most of them stated that it was not difficult for them to learn English. Moreover, seven out of the eight successful students stated that it is necessary to have an English teacher who guides and helps them through the most difficult aspects of the language. The only learner who reported no need for an English teacher stated that he had a good level of English and that he preferred learning on his own.

The main differences between the learners of this group were in the answers to the questions "Do you consider yourself a good English learner?", "What is the best way for you to learn English?", "What is the most difficult aspect of learning for you/ what is the easiest one?" and "Are lessons at school different from the ones at the language school?".

Although the whole group used different adjectives while answering the question "How do you think a good English learner should be like?", the adjectives could be taken as synonyms. Some of the descriptions were 'A good learner has good attitude and willingness to learn new things', 'A good student needs attention and to like studying' and 'A good learner study hard, participate and interest'.

The answers to the question "Do you consider yourself a good English learner?" varied among the members of this group. Four out the eight learners stated that they were good students of English and the reasons were 'I have only 12 years old and I'm the best in my class', 'I think I am a good English learner because I learn easily and I like English', 'Yes, I like to discover new words, work hard and get new explanations' and 'Yes, I always ask questions, I like English and I understand it'. The remaining four students stated that only sometimes do they consider themselves good English learners. The answers were 'Sometimes I am a good learner, but sometimes I am too quiet and I don't participate', 'Sometimes, because I don't like to speak in English', 'More or less, I need to work harder' and 'Sometimes, because I have to pay more attention to the details'.

Regarding the question "What is the best way for you to learn English?", four students reported that the best way for them to learn English is speaking. One of them added that 'Doing speaking we practice grammar and vocabulary at the same time'. Two students answered that the best way to learn English is going to a language school. Finally, two learners claimed that listening is the best way to learn English.

As far as the most difficult aspect of learning is concerned, six out of the eight students reported that the most difficult aspect is grammar as there are a lot of tenses and they are not able to learn and remember all the structures. Nevertheless, the two

remaining learners claimed that grammar is very easy, because once they learn the structure they always have to follow the same pattern. Instead, reading was considered to be the most difficult aspect of learning English. Nonetheless, one of the two students who reported grammar being easy claimed that 'Res és difícil, tot és fàcil si ho entens' (Nothing is difficult; everything is easy if you understand it). In addition, four out of the eight learners pointed out that vocabulary was the easiest area to learn. They emphasised their capacity to remember and use a lot of new words. Nevertheless, the answers of the remaining four students were split into speaking and listening. It is necessary to highlight that in some cases, the answers to these questions changed after having completed the exam. That is to say, some students stated that in this exam the easiest and the most difficult areas were different from the ones stated in the questionnaire before the exam.

Finally, as far as the differences between the lessons at school and the lessons at the language school are concerned, most learners claimed that the lessons are different due to the difference of levels of students in the same class. They pointed out that in the language school the level of the learners in the same class tends to be similar and, consequently, they could learn and improve faster. Nevertheless, one of the students claimed that the lessons are similar and that the only difference was that in the language school they are more concerned about speaking. Finally, another student claimed that the lessons at school had a better organization, they did the lessons faster and they were as well divided into levels.

Unsuccessful learners

As in the case of the successful learners' group, the group of unsuccessful learners also reported English as being a very useful and necessary language.

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Nevertheless, their willingness to increase their knowledge, be more fluent and learn new vocabulary renders a lower punctuation on the five-point scale. Four of the students gave 2-3 point punctuations to this question meaning that they thought about it 'almost never or sometimes'. In addition, most unsuccessful students mentioned that it was very difficult for them to learn English. Therefore, similarly to the unsuccessful learners' group, seven out of the eight unsuccessful students said that it was necessary to have an English teacher. Some of the reasons were: 'I think that it is necessary to have an English teacher because you understand and learn more', 'I think that it is better have an English teacher, because she explains you' and 'it is better to have a teacher because you can ask questions'. The answer of the only student who reported no need for an English teacher was 'Yes, if you don't know how to speak English, but if you know you can go on holiday and speak English, so you don't need a teacher'.

Regarding the question 'How do you think a good English learner should be like?', the unsuccessful learners' group had similar answers to the successful learners, but using different adjectives: 'A person with eager to learn', 'I think that a good English learner need to like English', 'Necessita estar atent, concentrat i que li agradi l'anglès'.

The answers to the question "Do you consider yourself a good English learner?" did not vary too much among the unsuccessful learners' group. Most of them reported not being good English learners, because they did not put enough effort in the learning process. Nevertheless, one of them claimed that she considered herself a good English learner since she liked learning languages.

As far as the best way to learn English is concerned, the group of unsuccessful learners came up with different answers. Three out of the eight unsuccessful learners

claimed that speaking is the best way to learn English. Contrarily, two of them reported watching movies in English as the best way to learn English. Finally, the three remaining students claimed that playing games was a good way to learn English.

Regarding the most difficult topic/area to learn, the unsuccessful learners claimed that it was very difficult for them to understand what native people say, therefore, four out of the eight students mentioned that the most difficult aspect was listening. Furthermore, the second most reported area of learning was speaking. Most unsuccessful learners reported not having a good command of the English language and not being good at speaking. Thirdly, only one student stated that grammar was very difficult for him as he was not able to remember all the structures. Contrarily to successful learners, three out of the eight students reported that grammar was the easiest area, because once they learn the structure, they always have to follow the same pattern. The second most reported easy area was vocabulary, as they claimed they did not have to learn too many words. Although seven of the students considered one of the areas to be more difficult and another one to be easier, one of the students found everything very difficult.

Finally, several differences were observed among the unsuccessful learners' beliefs regarding the differences between the lessons at the language school and the ones at their secondary school. Although not all of them answered these questions frequently as they were required (two or three days per week), it was seen that they had the tendency to enjoy more (although infrequently) the English lessons at school than the ones at their secondary school. They claimed that the lessons had better organization at their language school. Moreover, unsuccessful learners expressed the general belief that their low marks at the language school were due to the general low level among

students of their class at school. Therefore, since the lessons at school did not help them to progress at a fast rate, they had more difficulties to achieve the required level at their language school.

Therefore, the results showed both similarities and differences between the two groups of learners. In order to have a complete understanding of the differences and similarities between successful and unsuccessful learners, the different factors have been studied and analyzed separately. Nevertheless, as will be seen in the discussion section, the researcher has reached the conclusion that some of the factors are mutually related, that is to say, the different factors may influence one another.

5. Discussion

This study was directed towards the answer of two main questions: (1) Are there identifiable differences between successful and unsuccessful learners regarding factors such as beliefs, motivation, personality, learning styles and use of learning strategies? and (2) Does using learning strategies ensure success in the acquisition of the foreign language?

As far as the first question is concerned, it has been shown that the two groups of learners (successful and unsuccessful) presented both similarities and differences, although the differences were predominant. Each factor (i.e. beliefs, motivation and use of learning strategies among others) has been analyzed separately in order to have a complete understanding of the main differences and similarities between the two groups.

Firstly, it was observed that the number of unsuccessful students who completed the diary was lower than the number of successful learners. This indicates that

successful students tend to devote more time to the learning of the language outside school. The limitation of time devoted to English outside the school setting among less effective learners was also observed in Wong and Nunan (2011) "no less effective learners spent more than 10h a week out of class, and 70 per cent spent less than an hour a week on English out of class" (p.151). In addition, the number of successful students who used the Catalan option in their diaries and questionnaires was lower than the number of unsuccessful learners. Therefore, it was apparent that unsuccessful learners showed less command of the English language and less benefit from learning opportunities, since not all of them chose the English option, although it was a good way to practice their writing skills.

The second main difference with high relevance was the use of learning strategies outside the school setting. It was observed that the number of strategies and activities performed by successful learners was higher than among unsuccessful learners. Nevertheless, some unsuccessful learners also reported using some learning strategies, although less frequently. This was also observed by Halbach (2000), who claimed that "it does become apparent that the more successful students use the strategies more frequently, and thus get a higher score according to the rating scale" (p. 91). In both groups, the most common reported activities performed outside the school setting were audiovisual: *listening to music in English* and *watching films in English.* Nevertheless, while successful learners carried out activities which covered the four language skills, unsuccessful learners limited their practice to listening. In addition, although unsuccessful learners limited their practice to listening and it would be expected for them to consider it the easiest part of the exam, they claimed that, in fact, it was the most difficult aspect. The previous statement could be related to the fact that

unsuccessful learners showed less command of their learning process since they reported using several learning strategies without clear objectives behind them. Contrarily, successful learners carried out activities with complete pre-established goals in mind. Therefore, it becomes apparent that learning strategies need to have clear objectives behind them in order to become effective. As Halbach (2000) suggests, "one of the main problems of weaker students was the selection and/or creation of appropriate, well-focused follow-up activities" (p.92).

The preferred learning styles of the learners also play an important role in the process of acquisition of a foreign language. It has been observed that the dominant style among successful learners is 'communicative' which is followed by the 'concrete' and 'analytical' styles. On the other hand, the predominant style among unsuccessful learners was 'concrete' which was followed by the 'communicative' style. This presented some similarities with the study by Wong and Nunan (2011), who claimed that the dominant style among successful learners was 'communicative' which was followed by 'analytical' and 'authority-oriented'. In addition, they also pointed out that unsuccessful learners were split between 'authority-oriented' and 'communicative' styles. Therefore, in order to observe whether the participants of the present study could as well be analyzed as preferring the 'authority-oriented' style, the researcher asked the learners' teachers, who described them as preferring the 'authority-oriented' and the 'concrete' styles. Nevertheless, as it could be expected, teachers claimed that although four of the unsuccessful learners tended to be attentive and take notes in class, they did not benefit from it since they limited their learning to class attendance.

Motivation was as well considered a key factor influencing the process of English as a Foreign Language learning. Unsuccessful learners seem to be more guided

by instrumental rather than integrative motivation since most of them claimed to think very frequently about the statement 'I am only interested in passing my exams'. On the other hand, most successful learners pointed out that they were interested in understanding the messages of native speakers and, therefore, it seemed that they had willingness to learn English in order to be able to communicate with the target community. Therefore, successful learners would be considered to be guided by their integrative motivation. Similarly, the study by Gan et al. (2004) showed that successful learners were motivated both externally and internally, but sources of internal drive were predominant.

Another relevant aspect which can favor or restrict students on their learning process is their personality. Successful learners tend to be seen as more active and self confident whereas unsuccessful learners tend to show shyness and insecurity. This seems to benefit successful learners since they tend to rely on their own ideas and their personality style helps them to participate, enjoy their oral presentations, give their opinions and ask questions when necessary. Contrarily, the shyness reported by unsuccessful learners seems to prevent them from making the most of the learning opportunities. Less effective learners tend not to like giving their opinions in front of other classmates and it was stated that they did not enjoy speaking English, which prevented them from improving their speaking skills in class and outside the school setting. Successful learners tend to have greater control of their language learning and their activities' performance since, contrarily to unsuccessful learners, they showed their preference for working alone. Nonetheless, some of the reasons that unsuccessful learners gave for their preference for working in pairs and/or groups was that in groups they did not have to work as much as when carrying out the activities on their own.

Their reasons were therefore more directed towards their lack of willingness to perform activities. In addition, an important aspect related to personality should be taken into account, namely whether learners present the same personality inside and outside the school setting. Less effective learners might also be shy and insecure outside the school setting or it could well be the case that their personality inside the class is influenced by their beliefs about the difficulty of the learning of the language and their motivation. Therefore, the level and nature of their motivation may guide them to show a different personality. If they are lead by a low level of motivation (mainly instrumental) and they have negative beliefs towards the usefulness, necessity and the process of acquisition of the target language, they are more likely to show negative attitudes and lack of willingness to continue learning the language.

Finally, the results also showed that beliefs tended to present similarities and differences among both groups of learners. As Mori (1999) suggested, "both learners' epistemological beliefs and language learning beliefs can partially account for their achievement in the target language" (p.14). Successful and unsuccessful students agreed on the usefulness and necessity of learning English, on the necessity of having an English teacher and on the description of a good English learner. Nevertheless, while successful learners claimed that speaking, going to a language school and listening were the best ways to learn the language, unsuccessful learners stated that speaking, watching movies and playing games were the best ways to learn English. Therefore, although different responses arose between the two groups, all of them agreed on the fact that speaking and listening (i.e. watching films in the case of unsuccessful learners). Nonetheless, unsuccessful learners did not mention going to a language school as being one of the best ways to learn English. This could suggest that successful learners are

more concerned about their attendance to the language school as being a facilitator in their learning process. Another relevant issue was the most difficult area for them to learn. Unsuccessful learners split their answers between listening, speaking and grammar whereas successful learners pointed out that grammar and reading were the most difficult areas, which is related to the fact that they devoted most of their out of school practice to listening and speaking. Contrarily, although unsuccessful learners mainly limited their practice to listening, they found it very difficult, maybe because they did not make a good use of their learning strategies. Nonetheless, when asked about their change of learning styles for future examinations, all learners except for one claimed that they were going to study more.

The fact that unsuccessful students did not use learning strategies so effectively as successful students is considered to be the argument that accounts for the second main question of this study, namely "Does using learning strategies ensure success in the acquisition of the foreign language?". It has been observed that the use of learning strategies is not as commonly reported among unsuccessful learners as among successful learners. Nevertheless, some unsuccessful learners reported using several learning strategies. The main problem detected was that less effective learners carried out the activities without a clear rationale behind them. They did not report using follow-up activities, such as translating the lyrics of the songs they listen to or summarizing the films they watch. Consequently, it has been seen that using strategies per se does not guarantee success in the acquisition of the language, but when the strategies are well used, they tend to have a positive impact on the ultimate level of competence. Therefore, the main aim of unsuccessful learners would be to increase the use of learning strategies outside the school setting and learn how to use them properly.

Although the different factors have been analyzed separately, they seem to be strongly related. Results suggest that students' motivation may interfere in their language learning beliefs, which at the same time may have an effect on their use of learning strategies and activities and, consequently, on the time devoted to English outside the school setting. In other words, it has been observed that successful students generally claimed a high degree of motivation, which provided them with a further wish to improve their level of English and as a consequence, their willingness to carry out activities and to benefit from all learning opportunities was greater. Contrarily, some unsuccessful learners were described by their teachers as unmotivated and passive. Therefore, it could be stated that their low degree of motivation leads them to devote limited time to English outside the school setting, and, consequently, their report of learning strategies use was limited.

In addition, in both groups there were students who claimed that English was a difficult language. Nevertheless, the number of unsuccessful students who made that claim was higher than the number of successful learners. This could as well have a correlation with the previously mentioned factors. That is to say, it could be the case that the number of unsuccessful learners who considered English a difficult language was higher due to their limitation of time devoted to the learning of the language outside the school setting. Nevertheless, it is difficult to agree on what comes first. That is to say, it is plausible to say that unsuccessful learners find the learning of the English language more difficult than successful learners due to their limited practice outside the school setting or they could well limit their practice due to the difficulty, which, at the same time, causes lack of motivation.

Finally, as Mori (1999) stated, it has been observed that the learners' beliefs on the process of acquisition of the target language may have an impact on their performance and on their ultimate level of competence. It could also be agreed that their learning inside the classroom may have an influence on the overall perception of the process of language learning. That is to say, the way students perceive their lessons both at school and at the language school may have an impact on their beliefs and their general beliefs can at the same time have an impact on their success.

5.1 Pedagogical implications

The study of successful and unsuccessful learners has a number of pedagogical implications that might lead to improved classroom practices. Having established that there are relevant differences between the two groups of learners, it would be necessary for teachers and learners to take them into account so as to make learning and teaching practices more effective and relevant. Therefore, it would be a good idea to start devoting time to "learning how to learn", that is to say, it would be necessary for teachers to teach unsuccessful learners how to use strategies more effectively and to encourage them to make the most of their learning opportunities. Therefore, by modifying or increasing their use of learning strategies, all learners would benefit from it and it would, supposedly, have a good effect on their learning rate and their ultimate level of competence.

Additionally, it has been observed that the majority of successful and unsuccessful learners pointed out that the lessons at high school were different from the ones at the language school. Learners claimed that the ones at the language school had a better organization and were more dynamic. The main concern of both groups of

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learners was the heterogeneous nature of groups in their high school. They stated that this was their main drawback since they could not benefit from their lessons at school.

Therefore, by observing that the most common belief is that the lessons are completely different and observing as well that the only student who stated that the lessons were better organized at school claimed that they were split into groups according to their levels, it could and should be necessary to have enough teachers to be able to split students into levels so as to make high school lessons more effective. The level problems at high school seem to have an effect on the motivation of learners and, therefore, on their willingness to continue learning the language outside the school setting. Moreover, by dividing the learners according to their level, teachers would be able to satisfy their needs and interests. In addition, by having fewer students, the lessons would be more individualized and learners could receive advice from teachers on what aspects they need to improve and how they can do it. Therefore, this would greatly change the learning activities and strategies carried out by students outside the school setting and, consequently, increase the amount of time devoted to English outside school.

6. Conclusions

The aim of this study was to explore the differences between successful and unsuccessful English learners concerning different factors such as the use of learning strategies, their preferred learning styles, their personality, their motivation and their language beliefs. Successful and unsuccessful learners were classified according to their performance, their teachers' perception and their results in the exams. The participants were 8 successful and 8 unsuccessful intermediate level English learners from a

language school in Rubí. By analysing their diaries and questionnaires, clear differences emerged between the two groups.

The main difference that was hypothesized to be a clue factor influencing the success in the acquisition of the target language was a good use of learning strategies. It has been confirmed that the use of learning strategies was more prevalent and effective among successful learners. That is to say, the number of strategies reported was higher among effective learners and the objectives behind them were pre-established, whereas the number of strategies reported by less effective learners was lower and there was not a clear rationale behind them. At the same time, this was shown to be related to the time devoted to the learning of the language outside the school setting. Since successful learners reported practicing the four language skills while performing a high number of activities, it has been concluded that they devote more time to English outside the class. Moreover, it has been observed that using learning strategies is as relevant as using them effectively.

Nonetheless, the use of learning strategies was not the only relevant difference between both groups of learners. It has been shown that personality, motivation and beliefs are also key aspects which may favor or be detrimental to students. Learners tend to benefit from their motivation and personality when they feel willing to learn and improve and when they are self-confident and risk-taking. If they find it useful to learn the language and they are guided by integrative motivation, just as successful learners do, they tend to devote more time to the learning of the language and, as a consequence, their success and their ultimate level of competence tends to be higher.

As Wong and Nunan (2011) highlighted, "we are left with the question of how teachers can help the less effective learners in their classrooms" (p.155). We would like

to suggest that a reduced number of students per class who are classified according to their level and a more conscious and explicit teaching of effective learning strategies would lead to a more effective, productive and individualized learning process.

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Appendices

(A) General questionnaire

1. How often do you think the following statements? Rate from 1-5.

1=never   2=almost never   3=sometimes   4=usually   5= almost always

It is very useful to learn English	
I am not interested in learning English	
I would like to speak English fluently	
I would like to learn more vocabulary	
It is very difficult for me to learn the language	
I do not need to study more	
It is always interesting to increase my knowledge	
I am only interested in passing my exams	
Others…	

2. Which of these situations do you prefer? Order them from 1(most preferable) -5 (least preferable).

Working alone	
Working in pairs	
Working in groups	
Doing role-plays activities	
Carrying out projects	

Why?

_____

_____

3. Do you feel identified with these statements?

	YES	NO
I get nervous when the teacher asks me a question		
I like giving my opinion in front of my classmates		
I enjoy doing oral presentations		
I get nervous when I have to talk to somebody in English		
I am afraid of making mistakes		

Why?_____

4. How often do you perform these activities? Rate from 1-5.

1=never   2=almost never   3=sometimes   4=usually   5=almost always

Read books in English	
Watch videos in English	
Listen to English music	
Watch TV series in English	
Talk to native speakers	
Speak English with friends	

5. What is the best way for you to learn English?

_____
_____

6. How do you think a good English learner should be like?

_____
_____

7. Do you consider yourself a good English learner? Why?

_____
_____

8. Do you think it is necessary to have an English teacher or would you prefer to study English on your own? Why?

_____
_____

(B) Questionnaire before the exam

1. Where and how did you study for your exam? Tick or cross.

I studied in my bedroom	
I studied in the living room	
I studied in the office	
I studied listening to music	
I need complete silence while studying	
I made summaries for every topic	
I just read what I found important	
Others…	

2. Before an English exam I… (tick or cross)

Feel very nervous	
I feel relaxed, exams are easy	
Ask questions to my teacher to clarify my doubts	
Share my knowledge with my classmates	
Keep reviewing till the last minute	
Other feelings…	

3. How many hours did you study for the English exam?

_____

4. What is the easiest topic/area when you study English for an exam (e.g. grammar, vocabulary, writing…? Why?

_____

5. Which parts of the exam do you find more difficult? Rate from 1(least difficult) – 6 (most difficult).

Grammar	
Vocabulary	
Reading	
Writing	
Listening	
Speaking	

6. Would you have studied in the same way/would you feel the same if this was an English exam taking place at school? Why?

_____

(C) Questionnaire after the exam

1. **How do you feel after doing the exam? Tick or cross.**

I feel nervous, it was difficult	
I am going to pass, it was easy	
I have never needed to study, I always pass these exams	
I think I am going to pass, but I should have studied more	
I have studied a lot, but I still found it very difficult	
Others…	

2. **Did the exam include everything you had studied or did the exam include something that the teacher did not tell you about?**
   _____

3. **Which part did you find more difficult? Rate from 1-6.**

Grammar	
Listening	
Reading	
Speaking	
Vocabulary	
Writing	

Why? _____

4. **For the next exam I will… (Tick or cross).**

Study more	
Study the same amount of hours and in the same way	
Pay more attention to details	
Practice reading and writing skills	
Practice speaking skills	
Watch videos in English to improve my listening skills	
Others…	

Why?

_____

5. **Would you feel in the same way if you had taken an English exam at school? Why?**

(D)Diary template; English version

DATE:	
In-class activities: -Did you attend any English lessons today? -If so, were them at school, at the language school or both? -Did you enjoy them? -Which was the best activity? Why? -Which was the worst activity? Why?	
Outside the school setting: -Did you carry out any activities on your own related to English (e.g. watching a movie, homework, talking to someone in English…)? -If so, what was it? -What was the objective of the activity? -Did you find it useful?	
Considerations: (you don't need to answer these questions every day) -Are English lessons at school different from the ones in the language school? Why? -Do you like the organization of the English lessons at school? And at the language school? Why? -Are you happy with your progress regarding the English language? -What is the most difficult aspect of learning for you?	

(E) Diary template; Catalan version

<u>**DATA:**</u>	
<u>**Activitats dins de l'aula:**</u> -Has tingut classes d'anglès avui? -Si és així, han sigut a l'escola, a l'acadèmia o a les dues institucions? -T'han agradat? -Quina ha estat la millor activitat? Per què? -Quina ha estat la pitjor activitat? Per què?	
<u>**Fora de l'escola:**</u> -Has realitzat alguna activitat pel teu compte relacionada amb l'anglès (veure una pel·lícula, fer deures, parlar amb algú en anglès...)? -Si és així, quina activitat? -Quin era l'objectiu de l'activitat? -L'has trobada útil?	
<u>**Reflexions:**</u> (no és necessari respondre aquestes preguntes cada dia) -Creus que són diferents les classes d'anglès a l'escola i les classes de l'acadèmia? Per què? -T'agrada com estan organitzades les classes d'anglès a l'escola? I a l'acadèmia? Per què? -Estàs content/a amb el teu progrés en l'aprenentatge de la llengua anglesa? -Què és el que trobes més difícil d'aprendre?	

(F) Transcribed data

(A) GENERAL QUESTIONNAIRE:

9. How often do you think the following statements? Rate from 1-5.

1=never   2=almost never   3=sometimes   4=usually   5= almost always

Successful learners:

	Average
It is very useful to learn English	5
I am not interested in learning English	1
I would like to speak English fluently	4.3
I would like to learn more vocabulary	4.3
It is very difficult for me to learn the language	2
I do not need to study more	1.75
It is always interesting to increase my knowledge	4.3
I am only interested in passing my exams	1.25
Others…	

Unsuccessful learners:

	Average
It is very useful to learn English	4.5
I am not interested in learning English	3
I would like to speak English fluently	3.1
I would like to learn more vocabulary	3.1
It is very difficult for me to learn the language	4.5
I do not need to study more	3
It is always interesting to increase my knowledge	3.1
I am only interested in passing my exams	3.75
Others…	

10. Which of these situations do you prefer? Order them from 1(most preferable) -5 (least preferable).

Successful learners:

	Average
Working alone	1.5
Working in pairs	2.1
Working in groups	3.6
Doing role-plays activities	4.1
Carrying out projects	3.6

Why?

-I prefer doing projects because I think that they are a good and funny way to learn, but I prefer to do it alone, because I have my opinions and ideas and when I'm in a group, people don't like them and sometimes I have to do the most part of the project.

-Because doing role-plays activities you have more fun. Working alone is also good.

-I think that when I'm alone I can work better. It doesn't mean I hate work in pairs, I love it.

-Because if I work alone I can concentrate more.

- Because if you work in pairs is better than in group because there are too much people. I also like working alone.

-I like to work alone because I can use my ideas. In pairs is ok, but I don't like to work in group.

-Because two brains are best like one but in groups nobody work.

- I prefer working alone, because I like my ideas. In groups not everybody works.

Unsuccessful learners:

	Average
Working alone	4.4
Working in pairs	1.5
Working in groups	2.75
Doing role-plays activities	3
Carrying out projects	3.5

Why?

- I prefer working in pairs, because you can split the work because in groups two people work and the rest don't and work alone I don't like because I'm very shy.

-Because in pairs or groups you can split the project and I prefer it.

-Because I think doing games we practice English (Oral) and we have a good time.

-No m'agrada treballar sola, sempre penso que m'equivocaré…Està molt bé treballar en parelles.

-I don't have good ideas to work alone and work alone is boring.

-I don't like projects. Projects are long and sometimes we have to work alone and I don't like it.

-In groups you don't have to work too much.

-I like to work in pairs, always with mi friend because we know each other.

11. Do you feel identified with these statements?

Successful learners:

	YES	NO
I get nervous when the teacher asks me a question	3/8	5/8
I like giving my opinion in front of my classmates	8/8	-/8
I enjoy doing oral presentations	8/8	-/8
I get nervous when I have to talk to somebody in English	-/8	8/8
I am afraid of making mistakes	2/8	6/8

Why?

- It is about language school, because I'm more comfortable here that in the school. Here I speak more and I'm more fluent. I think that it's for my classmates, but it's strange.

-Sometimes I am afraid of making mistakes and get nervous, but the teacher at the language school is very nice and she doesn't put me nervous.

- Because I'm here to learn and to make mistakes.

-I never get nervous.

- I don't feel nervous because if I'm with my classmates and I do a mistake they will help me it isn't very worrying for me and I prefer practise the oral because I would have my oral English better.

- I think it is good to do errors because this you can learn. I like doing oral presentations and giving my ideas.

-I like do oral presentations because I like giving my knowledge and opinions. I'm not afraid of making mistakes because the teacher correct me and one more thing I learn.

- I like speaking English with people, because I can practice. I am sometimes nervous when I make mistakes.

Unsuccessful learners :

	YES	NO
I get nervous when the teacher asks me a question	6/8	2/8
I like giving my opinion in front of my classmates	1/8	7/8
I enjoy doing oral presentations	2/8	6/8
I get nervous when I have to talk to somebody in English	7/8	1/8
I am afraid of making mistakes	7/8	1/8

Why?

-I don't like oral presentations because I get nervous.

- Because I'm shy to speak in English.

- Sometimes I get nervous doing oral presentations because I always think I forget it. But I think making mistakes is normal.

- Em fa molta vergonya parlar en anglès…ara estic millorant, però em costa.

-I don't like speaking in English, I'm always nervous.

-I like to speak English, but I'm very shy…

-I always think I am bad speaking English.

-I hate presentations. If it is in group more or less, but alone is horrible.

12. How often do you perform these activities? Rate from 1-5.

1=never   2=almost never   3=sometimes   4=usually   5=almost always

Successful learners:

	Average
Read books in English	4
Watch videos in English	4.5
Listen to English music	4.5
Watch TV series in English	3.75
Talk to native speakers	2.75
Speak English with friends	3.5

Unsuccessful learners:

	Average
Read books in English	2
Watch videos in English	3
Listen to English music	4
Watch TV series in English	3
Talk to native speakers	1
Speak English with friends	2

13. What is the best way for you to learn English?

Successful learners:

- I think that the best way is to go to an English academy, because there you practice and learn a lot of things.

-I think that it is better to learn English in a language school.

-Listen it.

- Listening to English is very useful.

- Doing games and learn when you are playing or do oral activities.

-Speaking helps to learn the language, during speaking we practice grammar and vocabulary at the same time.

- With funny activities in which we speak.

- For me the best way to learn English is doing speaking. Doing speaking we practice grammar and vocabulary at the same time.

<u>Unsuccessful learners:</u>

- For me the best way to learn English is doing speaking, but I don't like it…

- Talk to native speakers, because you learn the speaking, but I can't do it.

- Speaking English, but for example one day with the family, friends…

-Fent jocs s'apren molt. Parles I pots practicar la gramàtica i vocabulari.

-Watch films in English is good, but I don't do it a lot.

-Games are funny and you learn a lot.

-I learn much when we play games, we speak, grammar and vocabulary.

-Watching movies you learn a lot, it is a good way.

14. How do you think a good English learner should be like?

<u>Successful learners:</u>

- A good learner has good attitude and willingness to learn new things.

-A person with a lot of attention and a lot of eager to learn English.

- A good learner study hard, participate and interest

- He or she is motivated and like English.

- The person should work hard participate and I think the person should show interest

- He or she needs motivation and to like English.

- A good student needs attention and to like studying.

- He or she needs to like English and be interested in learning.

Unsuccessful learners:

- I think that I'm a good English learner because I like learning languages. (she did not understand the question).

- I think that a good English learner need to like English.

- A person with eager to learn.

- Necessita estar atent, concentrat i que li agradi l'anglès.

-A good learner study, review and is interested.

-Motivated, like English, interest and good attitude.

-He needs to like English and have interest to learn the language. Study is necessary.

-I think that a good English learner needs to put effort.

15. Do you consider yourself a good English learner? Why?

Successful learners:

- Sometimes I am a good learner, but sometimes I am too quiet and I don't participate.

- Sometimes, because I have to pay more attention to the details

-Yes, I have only 12 years and I'm the best in my class.

- Sometimes, because I don't like to speak in English.

- Yes, I like to discover new words, work hard and get new explanations.

- I think I am a good English learner because I learn easily and I like English.

- More or less, I need to work harder.

- Yes, I always ask questions, I like English and I understand it.

Unsuccessful learners:

-More or less, sometimes it is easier to learn English, the marks don't worry.

- No, because I don't put a lot of effort.

- No, I think I have to pay more attention in class.

- No, perquè necessitaria implicar-me més.

-No, I don't study and review…

-I study but is difficult to learn English.

-Yes because I like learning the languages.

-I need to put more effort.

16. Do you think it is necessary to have an English teacher or would you prefer to study English on your own? Why?

Successful learners:

- In my opinion it is necessary to have an English teacher, because you don't know most of the things and you need someone who teaches you.

-In my opinion it is better having a teacher. He or she can explain what you don't understand.

-A teacher. Just prefer it. That's all.

- I prefer to study English on my own, because I have a good level of English.

- Is better to have a techer because she could help you and explain the thinks that you don't understand.

- It is good having a teacher, he or she can help in your doubts**.**

- It is better to have a teacher because you can ask questions.

- I think that it is necessary to have an English teacher because you understand and learn more.

Unsuccessful learners

- I think that it is necessary to have an English teacher because you understand and learn more.

- I think that it is better have an English teacher, because she explains you.

- Yes, if you don't know how to speak English, but if you know you can go on holiday and speak English, so you don't need a teacher.

- És molt bo tenir una professora, perque et pot explicar les coses.

-It is better to have a teacher because you can ask questions.

-Is better to have a teacher because you can learn more.

-A teacher explains and you understand. If no, you don't learn.

-You ask questions to the teacher and you learn more.

(B) QUESTIONNAIRE BEFORE THE EXAM:

7. Where and how did you study for your exam? Tick or cross.

Successful:

I studied in my bedroom	8/8
I studied in the living room	1/8
I studied in the office	3/8
I studied listening to music	1/8
I need complete silence while studying	6/8
I made summaries for every topic	6/8
I just read what I found important	1/8
Others…	

Unsuccessful:

I studied in my bedroom	8/8
I studied in the living room	-/8
I studied in the office	-/8
I studied listening to music	2/8
I need complete silence while studying	1/8
I made summaries for every topic	-/8
I just read what I found important	2/8
Others…	

8. Before an English exam I… (tick or cross)

Successful learners:

Feel very nervous	3/8
I feel relaxed, exams are easy	5/8
Ask questions to my teacher to clarify my doubts	4/8
Share my knowledge with my classmates	1/8
Keep reviewing till the last minute	4/8
Other feelings…	

Unsuccessful learners:

Feel very nervous	5/8
I feel relaxed, exams are easy	-/8
Ask questions to my teacher to clarify my doubts	-/8
Share my knowledge with my classmates	1/8
Keep reviewing till the last minute	5/8
Other feelings…	

9. How many hours did you study for the English exam?

Successful learners:

- I studied two hours for my English exam.

- I studied 5 hours.

-I studied 3-4 hours.

-2 hours.

- I studied for 1 hour

-1 hour and a half.

-2 hours.

- I don't know the hours but I studied on Saturday and Sunday.

-I don't know the hours but I studied on Sunday and Monday.

-I studied half an hour.

- Half an hour.

-Vaig estudiar una hora.

-Twenty minutes.

-Half an hour.

-Two hours.

-An hour.

10. **What is the easiest topic/area when you study English for an exam (e.g. grammar, vocabulary, writing…? Why?**

Successful learners:

- Speaking is easy because we do a lot of speaking in the academy.

- Listening is easy, because I listen to more difficult things.

- Vocabulary, I can memorize and use lots of new words.

- Vocabulary, because you study the nouns and that's all.

- Listening is easy, because I watch films in English.

- Speaking is easy, I practice a lot.

- In my opinion, vocabulary is easy.

- Vocabulary, because there weren't too many words and I can memorize well.

Unsuccessful learners:

- Vocabulary, because I don't have to study much.

- Grammar, because there are structures.

- Grammar, because you only have to learn structures and then, it's always the same.

-El vocabulary ja que tinc bona memòria.

-Grammar, because I learn the structure and that's all.

-For me, nothing is easy.

-Vocabulary, not too many words.

-Vocabulary, I can remember words, but not pronounce them well.

11. **Which parts of the exam do you find more difficult? Rate from 1(least difficult) – 6 (most difficult).**

Successful: Average

Grammar	4.75
Vocabulary	1.6
Reading	3.75
Writing	4
Listening	3.75
Speaking	2.8

Unsuccessful: Average

Grammar	3.3
Vocabulary	1.75
Reading	3
Writing	4.25
Listening	5
Speaking	4.6

12. **Would you have studied in the same way/would you feel the same if this was an English exam taking place at school? Why?**

Successful learners

-More or less, because I think that in the school speaking and reading are more difficult and I get more nervous and we don't do writing in the exam, we do a writing for each unit, but we can search the words in the dictionary.

- No, at school are easy. The level of the language school is high.

- No, I don't study for exams at school, they are easy.

- Yes, because for me, the school and academy exams are the same importance, because the English is very important for the future.

- I feel the same that in school because we do similars things

- Yes, I always know I pass and I don't worry.

-No, because the English academy is a little exam and in school is important for pass.

- Yes, because English is important and I prepare the same way for both.

Unsuccessful learners

-Yes, because English is difficult and I have to prepare the exams a lot.

- No, I don't study for exams at school, they are easy.

-No, because at school they are easier and I don't study for they. At the academy I study more.

-No estudio per els exàmens de l'escola, perquè són fàcils.

-I study for both, but it is difficult.

-I don't study English too much…

-In the school the level is different, it is easy.

-English is difficult and I don't know how study.

(C)QUESTIONNAIRE AFTER THE EXAM:

6. **How do you feel after doing the exam? Tick or cross.**

Successful:

I feel nervous, it was difficult	2/8
I am going to pass, it was easy	5/8
I have never needed to study, I always pass these exams	2/8
I think I am going to pass, but I should have studied more	6/8
I have studied a lot, but I still found it very difficult	4/8
Others…	

Unsuccessful:

I feel nervous, it was difficult	8/8
I am going to pass, it was easy	-/8
I have never needed to study, I always pass these exams	-/8
I think I am going to pass, but I should have studied more	5/8
I have studied a lot, but I still found it very difficult	5/8
Others…	

7. **Did the exam include everything you had studied or did the exam include something that the teacher did not tell you about?**

Successful learners

- Yes, in the part of vocabulary there were definitions and there were a time expression that she didn't said us.

- Yes, I studied everything, but it was a little bit difficult.

- It included everything, I studied everything.

- Yes, I studied everything.

- I studied that the teacher explain me.

- Yes, I reviewed everything.

- Yes, but it was a little bit difficult.

-The exam included everything that I studied

Unsuccessful learners

-The exam included everything that I studied.

- I didn't study everything.

- Yes, I studied everything.

- Ho vaig repassar tot…però hauria d'haver estudiat més.

-I didn't study too much and it was difficult.

-The exam included everything the teacher explains.

-I reviewed everything but not well.

-There was one thing in vocabulary she didn't say.

8. **Which part did you find more difficult? Rate from 1-6.**

Successful: Average

Grammar	4.1
Listening	2.3
Reading	3.8
Speaking	2
Vocabulary	3
Writing	3.5

Unsuccessful: Average

Grammar	5
Listening	3.5
Reading	5
Speaking	4.25
Vocabulary	3.25
Writing	4

Why?

Successful learners:

- Because in the parts of the other day you don't have to study and in grammar and vocabulary is more difficult because you have to memorize a lot and you don't know how the teacher will asked you the lesson.

- I speak with my uncle in English and it is easy. Grammar is sometimes difficult. I can't remember all the structures.

- It wasn't difficult.

- Grammar is a bit difficult always. Vocabulary is easy.

- The most difficult was the reading because I had to order a text and it was too dificult.

- Reading was a little bit difficult, but not much. Grammar is always the same. When you know the structure is always the same.

- Because it is difficult remember grammar rules. Reading you read and answer reading the text.

- Because grammar is the part more difficult and I have to study a lot.

<u>Unsuccessful learners</u>

-Because grammar is the part more difficult and I have to study a lot.

- Because I'm not good in the listening and the speaking.

- Because grammar you only study the structures and it is always the same. Vocabulary you have to memorize and I forget.

- Sóc molt vergonyosa per l'speaking i els listenings són molt difícils.

-Speaking is always difficult and this time grammar a little bit.

-Grammar was a little bit difficult. Speaking was very difficult and listening too. This time vocabulary was difficult it was in sentences not pictures.

-Grammar was very difficult.

-I didn't study well…

9. **For the next exam I will… (Tick or cross).**

Successful learners:

Study more	7/8
Study the same amount of hours and in the same way	2/8
Pay more attention to details	5/8
Practice reading and writing skills	5/8
Practice speaking skills	3/8
Watch videos in English to improve my listening skills	4/8
Others…	

 Unsuccessful learners:

Study more	8/8
Study the same amount of hours and in the same way	1/8
Pay more attention to details	2/8
Practice reading and writing skills	2/8
Practice speaking skills	7/8
Watch videos in English to improve my listening skills	3/8
Others…	

 Why?

Successful learners:

-Because I have got a lot of time to practice reading, writing and listening and I practice them during the course and I will study more the details, because there are things in the exam that I think that I understand and then I didn't understand them.

- I think I will pass, but I always think I have to study more and have higher marks.

- I only need to study a little bit more.

- The most difficult is grammar and I will do more exercises.

- To get a better mark I should watch video and listening because this is practise and it isn't necessary to study.

- I think I studied "poc", but good. Maybe I will practice the reading because it was a little bit difficult.

- I need to study more.

- Because in the next exam we will have to study more units.

Unsuccessful learners:

- Because in the next exam I will be more prepared.

- Because I can speak better.

- If I pass, I don't need anything else. If not, I will do something (study).

- He de millorar molt l'speaking i el listening per avançar.

-I need to study more to pass.

-Speaking and listening are difficult, I will practice more.

-Grammar was difficult I have to study.

-I don't study well.

10. **Would you feel in the same way if you had taken an English exam at school? Why?**

Successful learners:

- No, because in the school, exams are different and they are easy because we practice a lot and I'm not nervous in school exams.

- No, at school are easy. In the language school I have to study more.

- No, at school are easier.

- Yes, both exams are important.

- Yes because in the same places I learn English and it isn't different.

- In school are easier, but I don't think the academy is difficult, is always the same.

- No, in school exams are more important.

- Yes, because English is important.

<u>Unsuccessful learners:</u>

- Yes, because English is very difficult.

- No, at school are easier.

- No, at school are easier, I don't study and for the language school a little bit more.

- Al cole són fàcils.

-English is very difficult, but in school is easier.

-I am nervous in the language school, not in high school.

-In school are easy and I am not nervous.

-Exams in language school are very difficult I am nervous.