

Remedial Students' Attitudes towards English Language Learning and their Causal Attributions for Success or Failure

ทัศนคติต่อการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษของนักศึกษาที่ต้องเรียน
วิชาปรับพื้นฐานภาษาอังกฤษและปัจจัยที่เป็นสาเหตุ
ของความสำเร็จหรือล้มเหลวในการเรียน

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บทคัดย่อ

ทัศนคติต่อการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษและการระบุปัจจัยที่เป็นสาเหตุของความสำเร็จหรือล้มเหลวในการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษในอดีตของนักศึกษา มีความสำคัญต่อความพยายาม และความคาดหวังต่อความสำเร็จในการเรียนในอนาคต ผลการเรียนเป็นปัจจัยด้านแรงจูงใจที่สำคัญอย่างยิ่งปัจจัยหนึ่งที่นักศึกษาใช้เป็นตัวบ่งชี้ถึงความสำเร็จในการเรียน ดังนั้น สำหรับนักศึกษาที่มีผลการเรียนวิชาภาษาอังกฤษในระดับต่ำ นักศึกษากลุ่มนี้อาจรับรู้เกี่ยวกับตนเองว่าไม่มีความสามารถในการเรียน อันอาจส่งผลให้นักศึกษามีทัศนคติที่ไม่ดีต่อการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษ วัตถุประสงค์ของการวิจัยชิ้นนี้คือการศึกษว่าทัศนคติต่อการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษและการระบุปัจจัยที่เป็นสาเหตุของความสำเร็จหรือล้มเหลวในการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษของนักศึกษาที่เรียนวิชาปรับพื้นฐานภาษาอังกฤษซึ่งถูกจัดว่าเป็นนักศึกษากลุ่มที่มีผลการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษในระดับต่ำจำนวน 542 คน โดยใช้แบบสอบถามเป็นเครื่องมือในการเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูล ผลการศึกษาชี้ให้เห็นว่านักศึกษามีทัศนคติที่ดีต่อการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษในแง่ของความสำเร็จ

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ของภาษาอังกฤษในการเรียน การทำงานในอนาคต และการสื่อสาร ถึงแม้ว่า นักศึกษาจำนวนมากแสดงความคิดเห็นที่มีแนวโน้มว่าไม่ชอบภาษาอังกฤษ ไม่สนุกในการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษ หรือยังไม่แน่ใจว่าตนเองชอบหรือมีความสุขกับการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษหรือไม่ก็ตาม นักศึกษาอ้างปัจจัยที่เป็นสาเหตุของความล้มเหลวหรือล้มเหลวหลักสองปัจจัย ได้แก่ ความพยายามในการเรียน และครูผู้สอน ผลการศึกษานี้จะเป็นประโยชน์ต่ออาจารย์ผู้สอนภาษาอังกฤษ ให้เข้าใจมุมมอง นักศึกษาที่จัดอยู่ในกลุ่มที่มีผลการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษในระดับต่ำ และดำเนินการ เกี่ยวกับปัจจัยที่เป็นสาเหตุของความล้มเหลวหรือล้มเหลวอย่างเหมาะสมเพื่อส่งเสริมให้นักศึกษาเกิดแรงจูงใจในการเรียน และความคาดหวังต่อความสำเร็จในการเรียน ในอนาคต

คำสำคัญ: ทศนคติ ปัจจัยที่เป็นสาเหตุของความล้มเหลวหรือล้มเหลว นักศึกษา ที่มีผลการเรียนในระดับต่ำ

Abstract

Attitudes towards English language learning and causal attributions for success or failure in particular have been found to notably affect efforts and expectations for learning success. Grades, one of the crucial motivational factors, have often been interpreted by most students as a successful indicator of their learning. Therefore, students with low grades who possibly perceived themselves as performing poorly in learning may contribute to negative attitudes towards learning language in general. This study, therefore, aims at investigating through a questionnaire attitudes and causal attributions for the past success or failure of 542 low proficient students who enrolled in a Remedial English course. The findings suggest that students seemed to have positive attitudes towards English learning due to the importance of English for their study, future careers, and for communication, although some of them tended to dislike English,

did not enjoy studying English, or even were unsure whether they liked or enjoyed studying English. They tended to attribute their success or failure to efforts and teacher influence. The findings can be applicable for teachers to understand students' views on language learning and to deal effectively with their perceived attributions to facilitate learning motivation and expectations for future success.

Keywords: Attitudes, Causal attributions, Low proficient students

Introduction

In the domain of motivation, learning experience is always involved in emotional reactions and motivation in actual language learning (Elyıldırım & Ashton, 2006). From learners' perceived experience, grades have been considered as one of the main concerns of teachers and researchers relating to learners' attitudes towards language learning (Brophy, 1998, Covington, & Teel, 1996 as cited in Dörnyei, 2001). Grades are possibly perceived as an indicator of success and high ability rather than as a personal benefit of learning. As a result, for many students, particularly for those who have to take English fundamental courses just to cover study requirements in their academic fields, getting good grades in English may attract more attention than learning, leading to more endeavors to get higher marks in exams in whatever ways rather than trying to master the language for its own sake. An influence of learning experience on attitudes suggested by Elyıldırım & Ashton (2006), and the longitudinal studies of Burstall (1974) as cited in Stern (1983) pointed out that successful learning experiences promote more positive attitudes resulting in more endeavors to learn. Positive attitude is one of the three objectives for curriculum change in English teaching and learning in schools in

Thailand in that students are encouraged to appreciate the English language and its culture (Wiriyaichitra, 2002). By doing this, it is expected that students will have correct understanding of the English language and its culture and, in turn, more or less change their attitudes towards English. This brings about a tendency for successful future learning. In other words, such attitudes can be reinforced when students have positive attitudes and have been successful in their learning. On the other hand, those with negative attitudes and painful experiences resulting from failure can have even worse negative attitudes and fail to improve their language learning. This phenomenon can cause the sense of "learned helplessness" (Seligman, 1991) in which students are convinced by their previous failure that no matter how hard they attempt to learn, they still cannot change their situation, they do not succeed, it seems useless for them to try, and thus, have learnt not to try.

Based on the afore-mentioned evidence, students with low grades who possibly perceived themselves as performing poorly in learning may have a negative learning experience and consequently develop negative attitudes towards learning language in general. These students might show no real intention to study in English classes, to use English in their daily life, and above all to use English for their future careers. This study is particularly interested in investigating, according to Weiner's Attribution theory, the attitudes of remedial students who performed poorly on their national entrance examination, and studying their explanations for the past success or failure in language learning. As it is assumed and prejudged that these students might not have positive attitudes towards English, they may consider themselves not being successful in English language learning. As a consequence, they might be demotivated to learn and might not be highly attentive in English classes.

Although studies on attitudes towards language learning and attribution theory have usually been independently considered in the literature about language learning, these two variables clearly contribute to the literature on the psychology of language learning. The findings of this study, therefore, will provide implications for teachers to help them understand this group of low-achieving students for appropriate teaching preparation to motivate them to put more effort into learning English to enhance learning achievement and improve performance.

Grades and Learner Motivation

Motivation is involved in the actual process of language learning, and has been found to notably affect the level of efforts (Saville-Troike, 2006), language learning development and success (Dörnyei, 2005), and future learning outcomes, and the level of proficiency (Saville-Troike, 2006). Therefore, attention should be paid to motivational aspects which might lead to higher achievement and more learning success.

Grades are one of the crucial motivational factors, which have often been mentioned by teachers and researchers (Brophy, 1998, Covington & Teel, 1996 in Dörnyei, 2001). Perceptions from the learning experience and getting good grades are likely to be immediate indicators of learning ability and success, and can become more important than long-term personal benefits as learning development (Dörnyei, 2001). It implies that low grades can be perceived; thus poor performance can contribute to bad learning experiences. Sakai and Kikuchi (2009) found that low test scores can be perceived by many Japanese students, especially those whose motivation is low, as a demotivating factor.

To provide a conceptualization of the motivational aspects of low proficient learners, this study examines attitudes towards language

learning and causal attributions for success or failure which influence language learning success.

Attitudes towards Language Learning

Learners' attitudes towards language learning is one component of motivation and was proved to have influence on learners' proficiency and success (Gardner, 1979 in Stern, 1983; MacIntyre, 2002 in Robinson, 2002; Yashima, 2002 cited in Elyıldırım & Ashton, 2006, Elyıldırım & Ashton, 2006).

Kuhlmeier, van den Bergh and Melse (1996) in Breen (2001) compared an achievement of students in a German course and found that the achievement of those who had a positive attitude was rated as higher than those who had a negative attitude, both at the beginning and at the end of the course. Furthermore, attitudes and learning experiences were proved to have a clear relationship by Elyıldırım and Ashton (2006) who point out that attitudes can be reinforced when students with positive attitudes experience success, while attitudes tend to be more negative when students with negative attitudes fail to progress. Attitudes towards English will somehow affect performance. These research studies clearly presented that learners can benefit from positive attitudes, whereas negative attitudes may lead to demotivation, and further on to low proficiency.

Since attitudes can be modified by learning experiences, this study investigates learners' attitudes towards language learning according to their past experience together with their explanations for past performance by employing the Attribution theory (Weiner, 1979).

Attribution Theory

Attribution theory became dominant in student motivation research and educational psychology in the 1980s (Dörnyei, 2005). Relating to learner motivation in language learning, Attribution theory based on the theoretical framework of Weiner (1979) introduces causal attributions or a person's explanations for past actions and performances that successfully links past learning experiences with future effort, which in turn will affect their motivation and behavior (Bruning, Schraw & Ronning, 1999; Dörnyei, 2003; Dörnyei, 2005; Hsieh & Schallert, 2008; Parson, Hinson & Sardo-Brown, 2001; Santrock, 2008). In other words, it attempts to identify and describe how people give explanations for their past actions, why they were successful or unsuccessful, and why they then have perceptions which may affect their later actions (Dörnyei, 2001; Eggen & Kauchak, 1999; Fiske & Taylor, 1984 in Parson, Hinson & Sardo-Brown, 2001; McDonough, 1981).

According to Weiner (1992 and 1994), attributions affect student reactions to success or failure and can generally be described according to three different dimensions; locus, stability, and controllability. Locus refers to explanations about whether the cause is inside or outside, stability whether the cause stays the same or can change, and controllability the extent to which the students can or cannot control the causes of success or failure (Eggen & Kauchak, 1999).

Several attempts have been made to understand and explain causal attributions in language classroom situations including when students experience unsuccessful outcomes. Lei (2009) conducted a survey research to investigate the causal attributions of academic achievement, expectancy change and emotional responses in college students and found that students' grades influence the degree of

expectations for future actions and the willingness to work hard, and they feel depressed after experiencing failure. Another study conducted by Leger and Storch (2009) also concludes that how students perceive speaking activities and themselves as language learners has an influence on their willingness to communicate in different ways. These studies emphasize the importance of causal attributions and perceptions which further affects the motivation to learn.

In this study, Attribution theory is particularly relevant for two main reasons. The participants of this study were remedial students who were considered to be weaker than other students at the same academic level. They might be at risk of perceiving themselves as having failed to study English. Therefore, studying their explanations for their perceived success or failure linked to their past experience is important as this might reveal the underlying causes which they perceive to be the factors triggering their unsuccessful performance in learning English. Moreover, the perception of failure in language learning is a very common experience. This can also be perceived even by successful language learners in general. Secondly, because of their low scores in the entrance examination which are the criteria for placing this group of participants in a remedial course, how they perceive themselves as either successful or unsuccessful language learners as well as how they describe the causes for their performance is a study worth conducting.

Purposes of the Study

In the field of psychology and language learning in particular, this study aims at exploring remedial students' attitudes towards language learning and causal attributions or reasonable explanations for success or failure in their past learning experience. The finding can be applicable to

both course designers and classroom practitioners. The implications will contribute important information to help them understand low proficiency students and their motivational factors in terms of attitudes and perceptions towards success or failure; this might help them enhance and improve students' learning achievement. For course designers, they can have some concrete evidence to design courses and learning materials suitable for these low-achieving students to help them learn more favorably and successfully in English courses, by more or less considering their learning attitudes and learning preferences as the bases for curriculum and syllabus development. For teachers, the implications might help in preparing for teaching as well as developing teaching performance. Moreover, teachers can plan to deal with students' failures by reacting appropriately to their mistakes and attributing their failure to positive elements that can enhance their performance in future learning activities rather than focusing on factors that might undermine students' future endeavors. Teachers can also utilize appropriate strategies to help students improve how to deal with their attributions.

This study addressed the following research questions: (1) What are students' attitudes towards English language learning? And, (2) what are students' causal attributions for success or failure in English language learning?

Research Methodology

Participants

The 542 first-year students studying the Remedial English course at King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi (KMUTT) in Bangkok, Thailand were the subjects of this study. They scored below 30 marks on the national entrance examination. Their level of English language

proficiency was assumed to be relatively low since the School of Liberal Arts used this threshold as a principal criterion for the placement of students into Remedial English. This group of students was particularly interesting for this study because they might have been at risk of having perceptions about themselves as unsuccessful learners of English, having negative attitudes towards learning language, and further becoming demotivated by poor performance in the past compared to other students at the same academic level.

Research Instrument

The questionnaire format was used to collect data for this study. It comprises three main sections: personal data, attitudes towards English, and causal attributions for success and failure in English language learning. The second and the third parts of the questionnaire contain two sub-sections formatted in the 5-point Likert scale. In the second part, there are questions concerning students' attitudes towards English language in general, and attitudes particularly on English skills. The last part of the questionnaire consists of a section of questions concerning perceptions of success indicators, and in another section the causal attributions for success and failure. The attributions included in this second section are aptitude, ability, like, interest, effort, strategy, task difficulty, class atmosphere, teacher, luck, mood, and help or hindrance from others (see Appendix).

Research Procedures and Data Analysis

The procedures used to collect and analyze data are described as follows.

1. The questionnaire was designed in English and translated into the Thai language.

2. The questionnaire was piloted and tested with a class of 34 students who passed the Remedial class in the previous semester. The reliability of the questionnaire was determined using Cronbach's Alpha. The reliability coefficient was 0.811.

3. English lecturers administered the questionnaire to all subjects in their regular English classes and collected the questionnaire in the same class period. The return rate was 100%.

4. The data collected from the questionnaire was analyzed quantitatively by using SPSS for frequencies, percentages and mean scores.

5. Responses to the questions concerning personal data, students' attitudes, and perceptions were reported based on two research questions: (1) What are students' attitudes towards English language learning? And, (2) what are students' attributions for success and failure in English language learning?

As this group of students was ranked in the lower level of English language proficiency, it is also interesting to study how they perceived themselves as language learners—successfully or unsuccessfully. The proportions were also reported.

Findings

Research question 1: What are remedial students' attitudes towards English language learning?

To investigate the students' attitudes towards English language learning in general, means, standard deviations, and frequencies and percentages for the scores of the responses to the 5-point scale containing the statements in relation to the attitudes are calculated and presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Students' attitudes towards English language learning (n = 542)

Attitudes	Mean	SD	Disagree	%	Not sure	%	Agree	%
In general, I found studying English is interesting.	3.84	.82	28	5.2	122	22.5	390	71.9
In general, I like studying English.	3.14	.85	103	19.0	266	49.1	172	31.7
In general, I enjoy studying English.	3.31	.86	79	14.6	236	43.5	226	41.7
Compared to my other school subjects, English was more interesting.	3.73	.91	45	8.3	160	29.5	336	62.0
I think English is important for my study.	4.56	.55	-	0	14	2.6	527	97.3
I think English is important for my future career.	4.70	.52	2	0.4	11	2.0	527	97.2
I think English is important for communicating with other people.	4.40	.65	6	1.1	32	5.9	503	92.8
I am learning English because it helps me to learn about different cultures.	3.88	.78	23	4.2	119	22.0	399	73.6
I am learning English because I realize that it is important.	4.07	.69	12	2.2	70	12.9	459	84.7
I am learning English because others (i.e. parents, teachers, peers) say it is important.	3.59	1.04	104	19.2	90	16.6	347	64.3

As can be seen from Table 1, the great majority of students show good attitudes towards English language especially because they realize the importance of English for their study ($M = 4.56$), their future career ($M = 4.70$) and communication ($M = 4.40$).

However, it should be pointed out that a higher proportion of students were still not so sure whether they liked studying English (49.1%) or enjoyed studying English (43.5%) compared to those who agreed with these two statements (31.7% and 41.7%). Additionally, 19.0% and 14.6% of responses respectively, showed that the subjects did not like and did not enjoy studying English. These results imply that although the subjects disliked or were not certain whether they liked or enjoyed studying English, the importance of English was found to be the common feature that influenced their positive impressions of studying English.

Apart from attitudes towards English in general, the students were also asked to rate their attitudes towards each English skill by responding to the 5-point-scale on the questions "Do you like studying reading/ writing/ listening/ speaking/ grammar/ and vocabulary?"

Table 2 show students' responses where 'strongly disagree and disagree' are interpreted as they 'did not like studying the particular skill', and 'agree and strongly agree' are interpreted as they 'like studying that skill'.

The results indicate that reading and listening skills have been found most preferable by more than half of the respondents (57.0% and 53.5% respectively), while grammar, writing skills, and vocabulary were found least preferable by this group of students. However, the percentages of dislike by these students (29.9, 25.6 and 23.2 for grammar, writing and vocabulary respectively) are approximately a quarter of the entire responses with grammar being the highest percentage.

Table 2: Attitudes towards English skills (n = 541)

	Mean	SD	Disagree	%	Not sure	%	Agree	%
Reading skills	3.51	.866	73	13.5	159	29.3	309	57.0
Writing skills	3.09	.964	139	25.6	206	38.0	196	36.1
Listening skills	3.44	.885	80	14.7	171	31.5	290	53.5
Speaking skills	3.34	.928	99	18.3	189	34.9	253	46.6
Grammar	3.04	1.004	162	29.9	188	34.7	191	35.3
Vocabulary	3.17	.989	126	23.2	205	37.8	210	38.7

Research question 2: What are students' attributions for success and failure in English language learning?

To examine students' attributions for success and failure in English language learning, the students' were asked to rate whether they agree or disagree with the statements on the success/failure indicators and perceived reasons for success and failure. In other words, the responses reflect the perceptions about success and failure as well as describe the reasons behind their success and failure in language learning.

It can be seen from Table 3 that, on average, the subjects agreed to the two statements stated that I think successful learners are learners who can use English well in everyday life ($M = 3.62$), and those who have high confidence in using English ($M = 3.53$). This means that everyday English ability and self-confidence are important factors/indicators determining whether they are successful or unsuccessful in language learning. Interestingly, they did not think that successful English learners must be able to use English as native speakers ($M = 2.80$). It seems that the students perceived English language as a tool for communication and use rather than learning about the language itself. As a whole, students seemed to agree with all successful indicators like the use of English, confidence, grades, and being good learners except with native-like proficiency.

Table 3: Perceptions on success/failure indicators (n = 541)

	I think successful learners are learners who ...	Mean	SD
1	get good grades/ high examination scores	3.07	.936
2	have high confidence in using English	3.53	.976
3	think that they are good language learners	3.08	.956
4	can use English well in the classroom	3.27	.976
5	can use English well in everyday life	3.62	1.096
6	can use English accurately	3.04	1.097
7	can use English as native speakers of English	2.80	1.230

Apart from the perceptions on success indicators, the students were also asked to respond to the statements which reflect the reasons behind their success in language learning (see Table 4).

Table 4: Causal attributions for success and failure (n = 538)

	My level of success/failure at English depends on ...	Mean	SD
1	aptitude	3.44	.824
2	ability	3.48	.826
3	like	3.90	.889
4	interest	4.08	.765
5	effort	4.22	.767
6	strategy	3.80	.771
7	task difficulty	3.65	.760
8	class atmosphere	3.94	.821
9	teacher	4.23	.791
10	luck	2.66	1.049
11	mood	3.41	.950
12	help from others	4.05	.783

According to Table 4, the subjects rated teacher influence ($M = 4.23$) and effort ($M = 4.22$) as the first two perceived reasons which affected their success in English language learning, whereas they did not think that luck had an effect on their success ($M = 2.66$). The results seem to imply that students who are low achievers are quite dependent on teachers. This also matches the results in the research conducted in Asian countries such as by Lei (2009) who reiterated that Chinese college learners tend to attribute success to external factors, especially teachers' teaching quality, and attribute their failure to internal factors. Additionally, according to the study of Mori, Gobel, Thepsiri and Pojanapunya (2010) on attribution for performance of Thai and Japanese university students, interesting similarities regarding students' attributions were identified. They found that students seemed to focus more on external factors, especially teacher influence and classroom atmosphere, when they succeeded. On the other hand, when they failed, both groups seemed to focus more on internal causes, namely lack of ability and effort. However, the results of this study also indicate that the students realized that whether they are able to be successful also depended on their own effort. In other words, they realized that, apart from teachers, success in learning was their responsibility too.

Rather than paying attention to the students' attitudes and perceptions on English language learning, it is also interesting to study how they perceive themselves as language learners in terms of success or failure. Even though the English competency of this group of students is considered to be low, interestingly, more than half of them (57.58%) perceive themselves as successful language learners. This promising tendency sheds some light on the brighter side of their perception on language learning. Even though they got low scores in exams, they were

still optimistic about themselves, and if they put more effort in learning as suggested by their perceived causal attributions, they can more or less be successful in future language learning.

Findings Summary

In summary, the majority of the participants of this study who are considered to have a low proficiency of English based on their scores on national entrance examinations perceived themselves as successful learners of English. Although numbers of them tended to dislike or did not enjoy studying English or even were unsure whether they liked or enjoyed studying English, as a whole, they seemed to have positive attitudes towards English language learning in terms of the importance of English for their study, future career, and for communication. In other words, the significance of English was found to have a profound influence on their overall attitudes towards English language learning. While reading and listening skills were most preferable, grammar, writing and vocabulary were the least. To be successful language learners, they considered high confidence in using English, and using English well in everyday life, as the most important factors to indicate success. Finally, they tended to attribute their success or failure to their own effort and teacher influence.

Discussion

The present study was designed to survey low proficient students' attitudes towards language learning and casual attributions for their success or failure. Remedial students who considered themselves to have low proficiency in English were asked to report their perception whether they were successful language learners. The finding was unexpected and indicates that they perceived themselves as successful language

learners even though they got low scores in the entrance examination and were placed in a preparation course. This result may be explained by two different views. One possible explanation is that they were optimistic about their study, to view learning experience as success is kind of support and encourage willingness to learn better, even though the present finding seems not to support Lei's (2009) study which pointed out that higher grades encouraged more willingness to work hard. Another possible explanation for this is that the students did not perceive low scores as failure; on the other hand, they may not have expectations about a high learning outcome. In this case, the students might be at risk of not having more effort for future learning. According to these results, teachers may need to know their students more, and discover the actual explanations for their perceptions on a successful experience.

According to the findings, many students tend to dislike English or do not enjoy studying English, or are unsure whether they like or enjoy studying English. However, they still have positive attitudes towards learning English because of the importance of English for their study, future career, and for communication. This perception reflects both instrumental and integrative motivation (Gardner & Lambert, 1972) as English is considered important for enhancing their study, career as well as for communication with other people.

This finding is in line with Teauratanagul's study (2008) in which students who enrolled in fundamental English courses have a positive attitude towards English and exhibit positive motivation in English learning. However, there is always a contradiction between students' understanding of the importance of English and their attitude towards it (Lafaye & Tsuda, 2002 cited in Tsuda, 2003). The findings suggest one possible way that can help teachers to deal appropriately with low proficiency students.

At the beginning, teachers should help students realize more explicitly the importance of English in different aspects of their life, especially for their study, future career, and communication, as mentioned earlier. Once they realize the importance of English and its culture by the teachers' model cases, they might set achievement goals and then put more effort on their language learning.

Moreover, the findings on causal attribution for success or failure in this study suggest that the students tend to attribute their success or failure to teacher influence. The result is also consistent with the study of Williams and Burden (1999) who discovered that a teacher plays an important role in student conceptions of language learning success and failure. Therefore, teachers play a key role in giving support and responses to their learning outcome in order to encourage positive ways of thinking and provide opportunities to change external motivational factors to internal ones. Students should be encouraged to put more effort on their learning, which is considered the internal, changeable, and controllable attribute.

Regarding the activity preparation for this group of learners, teachers may consider focusing on activities relating to everyday English ability and self-confidence development since these two elements were perceived as the indicators of success or failure according to the findings of the current study. In addition, the findings also suggest that reading and listening are the most preferable skills. It is interesting to note that these two skills are receptive skills. This also accords with our earlier report showing that the students consider self-confidence as the indicator for the degree of success. It might be implied that they have more confidence in receptive skills, whereas they exhibit lower confidence in language production. Therefore, to improve their self-confidence in learning English, everyday English might be introduced and trained at the beginning through reading and listening activities, before productive language skills are incorporated.

Although the findings might not be transferable to other contexts with a high variation of students' characteristics since the data were collected from a small group of participants, the present study is useful in terms of the two aspects. Firstly, low proficiency students do not always perceive themselves as unsuccessful or have negative attitudes towards language learning as prejudged and misjudged by many teachers. Teachers should find out how their students create positive attitudes towards English and focus on that aspect. Secondly, teachers play significant roles on the development of students' perceptions on success or failure, therefore, teachers should be careful about how they react to students' learning performance in such a way that will not undermine their learning motivation, especially regarding language learning. In future investigations, it might be possible to expand the interesting findings from this current study on why low or high proficiency students perceive themselves as successful or unsuccessful.

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Appendix

Questionnaire: Remedial Students' Attitudes towards English Language Learning and their Causal Attributions for Success and Failure

1. Personal Data

Fill in the Information which is appropriate to you.

Hometown: _____

I graduated from:

() Private school () Public school () Technical collage

Sex: () Male () Female

2. Attitudes towards English language learning

This section examines how you feel about learning English.

Read the following statements and mark each statement on a scale which best describes whether you agree or disagree.

Attitudes towards English language learning

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1	English is interesting.					
2	I like studying English.					
3	Learning English is enjoyable.					
4	English is more important than other school subjects.					
5	English is important for my study.					
6	English is important for my future career.					
7	English is important for communicating with other people.					

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
8	English helps me to learn about different cultures.					
9	I am learning English because I realize that English is important.					
10	I am learning English because others (i.e. parents, teachers, peers) say it is important.					
11	I learn English because it is compulsory.					
12	I don't like learning English.					
13	Learning English is boring.					
14	English is less important than other school subjects.					
15	English is not important for my study.					

Attitudes towards English language skills

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1	I like studying reading skills.					
2	I like studying writing skills.					
3	I like studying speaking skills.					
4	I like studying listening skills.					
5	I like studying grammar.					
6	I like studying vocabulary.					

3. Perceptions of successful/ unsuccessful language learners

This section examines your beliefs about success/ failure.

Read the following statements and mark each statement on a scale which best describes whether you agree or disagree.

Success indicators

I think the most successful learners are learners who...		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1	get good grades/high examination scores.					
2	have high confidence in using English.					
3	consider themselves as good language learners.					
4	can use English well in the classroom.					
5	can use English well in everyday life.					
6	never make mistakes.					
7	use English like native speakers.					

Causal attributions for success and failure

This section examines the reasons behind your success/failure in language learning. Read the following statements and mark each statement on a scale which best describes whether you agree or disagree.

My level of success/failure at English depends on...		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1	Aptitude					
2	Ability					
3	Like					
4	Interest					
5	Effort					
6	Strategy					
7	Task difficulty					
8	Class atmosphere					
9	Teacher					
10	Luck					
11	Mood					
12	Help or hindrance from others					

Thank you very much for your cooperation