

A NARRATIVE INQUIRY OF A SUCCESSFUL MILLENNIAL IN INDONESIA: HOW DID HE ENGAGE AND LEARN ENGLISH LANGUAGE?

*Sri Imelwaty*¹, Rika Afriyanti¹, Ado Putri Adela¹*

Faculty of Social and Humanities, Universitas PGRI Sumatera Barat

**email: sri_imelwaty@upgrisba.ac.id, rikaafriyanti21@gmail.com, adoputriade@gmail.com*

Submitted: 2022-10-29, Reviewed: 2022-12-04, Accepted: 2023-02-07

DOI: 10.22216/jcc.2023.v8i1.1683 URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22216/jcc.2023.v8i1.1683>

Abstract

This study aims to describe the successful millennial stories and experiences in English language learning. This study used a qualitative research method with the type of narrative inquiry as a research design for researching how a successful millennial engages with English language learning. Additionally, this research can be an answer to the dearth of research investigating successful millennial in terms of their academic, economic, and political achievements and its relevance to their engagement in learning the English language, particularly in Indonesian contexts. Purposive sampling was adopted in selecting the participants of this study. The Semi-structured interview was employed to gather the qualitative data in terms of millennial stories and experiences in English language learning. Also, the researcher prepared the interview protocol to guide the interview process. Then, the researcher did interview during august 2022 for four phases by recording the conversation and after that the researcher transcribed the data and did the process of analyzing the data, such as coding, classifying, and interpreting. In conclusion, after analyzing the data, it is found that the participant has affective and cognitive engagement in English language learning. The participant has positive feelings toward English class at school and positive sense of belonging at school because he is interested, enjoyed full, and has high Self-confident in learning English. Sometimes, he has Negative feelings toward his friends. However, he had strategies in learning English and Self-regulation strategy.

Keywords: language learning engagement; narrative inquiry; successful millennial

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan kisah dan pengalaman milenial yang sukses dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif dengan jenis penelitian naratif sebagai desain penelitian untuk meneliti bagaimana seorang milenial yang sukses terlibat dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris. Selain itu, penelitian ini dapat menjadi jawaban atas kelangkaan penelitian yang menyelidiki milenial yang sukses dalam hal prestasi akademik, ekonomi, dan politik mereka serta relevansinya dengan keterlibatan mereka dalam belajar bahasa Inggris, khususnya dalam konteks Indonesia. Purposive sampling diadopsi dalam memilih peserta penelitian ini. Wawancara semi-terstruktur digunakan untuk mengumpulkan data kualitatif dalam hal cerita dan pengalaman milenial dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris. Selain itu, peneliti menyiapkan protokol wawancara untuk memandu proses wawancara. Kemudian, peneliti melakukan wawancara selama bulan Agustus 2022 sebanyak empat tahap dengan merekam percakapan tersebut dan setelah itu peneliti melakukan transkrip data dan melakukan proses analisis data, seperti coding, classifying dan interpreting. Kesimpulannya, setelah menganalisis data, ditemukan bahwa partisipan memiliki keterlibatan afektif dan kognitif dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris. Peserta memiliki perasaan positif terhadap kelas bahasa Inggris di sekolah dan rasa memiliki yang positif di sekolah karena dia tertarik, menikmati sepenuhnya, dan memiliki kepercayaan diri yang tinggi dalam belajar bahasa Inggris. Terkadang, dia memiliki perasaan negatif terhadap teman-temannya. Namun, dia memiliki strategi dalam belajar bahasa Inggris dan strategi pengaturan diri.

Kata kunci: Keterlibatan pembelajaran bahasa; pertanyaan naratif; Milenial sukses

INTRODUCTION

Studies on good language learners have grown theoretically and empirically since (Rubin, 1975) and (Stern, 1975) who explain that a learner can be success in learning foreign and second language was influenced by applying some effective strategies. In addition, aptitude, motivation and opportunity determine the learners can be a good language learner (Rubin, 1975). Another research who proposed by (Zhang, 2020) related the successful of the learners in learning language emphasizes that learner engagement; behavioral, affective, cognitive and also their language learning strategies become the factors of the successfulness in learning language. These findings indicate the improvement of understanding of the aspects of successful language learning in learning language. Additionally, a research area that is in line with good language learner topics has been developed, namely language learning style and strategies (Oxford, 2016) Language aptitude and motivation (Dornyei, 2005) and language learner identity, language learning and social change (Toohey B. N., 2011). These studies expose the evidence of the growth of language learning studies that emphasize on learners strategies and learning style, aptitude and motivation and learner identity which refers to their ability to participate in social life in using language. All these studies proof that research on language learning strategies always develop time by time.

Furthermore, the other previous studies on good language learners have argued that good language learners are the results of the use of learning strategies that are effective for them (Oxford, 2016). This study emphasizes that the learners' strategies in learning will determine the outcome of learning. Then, the other Studies have proposed that effective language learning is also related to cognitive, affective, and social domains (Griffiths, 2018). This study

explains that learning strategy is not the only variable contributing to becoming a good language learner because the engagements toward learning goals, tasks, attitude and context also determine the efficacy of the strategies. Hence, exploring the nexus of language learners' engagement and their success in gathering information to enhance language learners' performance is essential (Zhang, 2020). In English Language Teaching (ELT), new insights focusing on how English language learners engage and are successful in learning English are beneficial to inform in field of research and classroom instructions especially in learning English. Even, the previous studies have proved that many factors contributed to learners' success in learning language. However, lack of research is conducted for EFL students in Indonesia context exactly among millennial community. How their engagement in learning language and also their strategies are needed to be investigated to give a trigger for other millennial in learning English.

Currently, a huge number of young people who are being called millennial are becoming a success in their life in the fields of economics, politic, and academics within countries where English is not becoming the first language such as Indonesia. Millennial are people who have highest curiosity and different values, attitudes and job aspirations. They tend to have rapid changes and trends for future life including in learning language (Ng, Schweitze, & Lyons, 2012). These successful young people may have gone through the process of learning English as their second or third language previously for obtaining success. However, there is a dearth of research investigating successful millennial in terms of their academic and economics and their relevance to their engagement in learning the English language, particularly in Indonesian contexts. Hence, this research wants to investigate more about

the ways in which the successful millennial as an English language learner has engaged with his English language learning through a narrative inquiry especially in the context of English as a foreign language in Indonesia.

Shortly, through this study, it is hoped that it provides insights about how successful millennial as English language learners successfully engage their English language learning affectively and cognitively so that this paper can inform research and classroom instruction in English language teaching particularly in Indonesia context where English is standing as foreign language. In addition, the findings of this study draw a contribution to the body of knowledge by providing empirical data on English language learning engagement.

METHOD

Research Design

To achieve the objectives of this study, a qualitative approach with the type of narrative inquiry as a research design was chosen by the researcher. A technique for acquiring information and conducting research that has received extensive documentation in language teaching and learning is narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry grounded in the interpretive paradigm explores the experience of individuals and how their physical, social, and cultural environment impacts and shapes their individual experiences. Narrative inquiry is a way to understand the experience and a way to study experience (Clandinin, 2016).

Participant of the study

For this study, one of the successful millennial in Indonesia who is familiarly called “AH” will be selected as the participant. The researcher asked the availability of the participant to take a part in this study. “AH” is the son of a businessman and senator from Indonesia who has served as a member of the Regional Representative

Council of the Republic of Indonesia since 2009 until now.” AH” a 29 years old man who is successful in terms of his academic, economic, and business achievements. He has already agreed to share his experiences in English language learning. In terms of his academic achievements, he has completed his studies at Management S1 Pelita Harapan University and currently He continues his master's in Management program of post graduate at Andalas University. In term of his English proficiency, he achieved 583 TOEFL score when he was in 19 year old. Respecting to the economy aspect, he is a successful businessman who is also a millennial figure in West Sumatra. “AH” is currently active in a millennial who is engaged in the property sector in charge of the housing development business unit, malls, hotels, hospitals and Asphalt Mixing Plant (AMP) contractors, stone crusher as well educational foundations for kindergartens, elementary schools and high schools of health sciences in West Sumatra. This friendly, smiling young man also has an organizational career. In addition, He is also being the Head of Division at HIPMI Padang. HIPMI (Indonesian Young Entrepreneurs Association) is an independent, non-partisan organization of young Indonesian entrepreneurs engaged in the economy sector; he is also the Deputy Chair of the Real Estate Indonesia (REI) West Sumatra and active in the management of Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Padang.

Technique of Data Collection

In collecting data, the researcher used Semi-structured interviews. The data is collected for a month during August 2022 with for meetings of interview. Before conducting the interview, the researcher contacted the participant first and explained the purpose of the study which is about telling his experiences in learning the English language, particularly during his secondary school.

Then, the researcher met with the informant to discuss the points of the data was investigated in this research. There were two information that researcher investigated; first, his affective emotional engagement in learning English and second, the cognitive engagement in learning language. Then, for the first interview, the researcher interviewed the informant related to the first information that related to affective engagement in learning English language. The focus of the interview is the motivation and his learning style. There were some guided questions to help the researcher in doing interview. However, the questions were elaborated based on the situation and condition. The questions are; “How do you feel when you were learning English at secondary school?, what were your attitudes toward the teachers, your friends, and your English teachers?, did you have a sense of belonging at your secondary school?, how was it? please explain it”. During the interview the researcher asked for elaboration and clarification if his story is unclear. The length of audio for the first interview was around 25 minutes. Then, the second interview, the researcher did interview by emphasizing the information about his cognitive engagement in learning English. In this part, the questions were focus on the strategies and also activities or tasks that he used in learning English. The guided questions in this interview were; “What strategies did you apply to learning and using English?, did you have particular strategies and apply self-regulation? Please explain them”. The questions were elaborated based on the condition. The length of audio for the second interview was around 27 minutes. However, after conducting the two interviews, the researcher still missed some points about the informant experience. Therefore, the researcher did the third and fourth interview related to both of variables. The researcher had in-depth conversation to explore how

affectively and cognitively engage with English language learning including learning styles, strategies, motivations, tasks, and context to obtain related and detailed information. Finally, totaling 1 hour and 42 minutes of audio data was gotten from four times of interview and all the data were recorded. The recordings of interview were transcribed for analysis. Efforts are being made to keep the English translation of the data as close as possible to the original text, and the quality of the translation was re-checked to minimize errors.

Technique of Data Analysis

After getting the data, the researcher analyzed the data based on the given instrument. The analysis of the data was informed by (B.M.Tsui, 2011) a narrative inquiry of an English learner and teacher (Garrett & Young, 2009) personal narrative of an English learner. Narrative Inquiry aims to explore or elucidate how people frame, remember and report their lived experiences in the form of narratives (Squire, Andrews, & Tamboukou, 2013). Narratives can initiate or bring about personal and social change. In this study, the data initially organized chronologically from the participant’s experiences in learning English. (Rubin, 1975) The information coded following Fredricks’ model of three proposed engagement dimensions: behavioral/emotional and cognitive. The researcher made adjustments and modifications to their subcategories of learner engagement which comprised learning activities, context, and objectives in order to evaluate learner engagement with language acquisition. The data coded to categorize the themes in data analysis. (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) Explain that open coding, axial coding, and selective coding could be used in data analysis. In the beginning stages, the data manually coded line by line and given several categories. In the second phase, these categories analyzed

and divided into subcategories. For instance, topics and categories associated to positive or negative sentiments (such as nervousness, embarrassment, and determination) gave particular focus in participant's emotional involvement with English language learning. In the third phase, the transition from axial coding to interpretation with a reflective coding matrix included the Scott and Howell-proposed notion of a narrative plot line (Scott & Howell, 2008). An impartial coder asked to review and code the data in order to guarantee coding quality. The interviews were recorded, and after doing the interview, the researcher transcribed the data. The transcripts were then checked and reviewed repeatedly. Then, the final step was the analysis that related to affective and cognitive engagement by coding the data. The following is the result of data analysis process related to narrative inquiry of successful millennial in Indonesia.

FINDINGS

1. Affective Engagement: Positive feelings toward school-related activities.

In data analysis, the researcher intends to analyze the data in order to answer the research questions. The research question in this research is "How did the successful millennial as an English language learner affectively engage with English language learning?"

Extract 1

"The reason for learning English is because I am so interested, and I have great motivation to be able to speak English, I enjoy and I want to improve this ability. When I was in elementary school, only a few people can speak English, and this ability make me more

confident. (Source: Transcript 1, line 2-7, participant).

From the discussion presented above, the participant revealed that he enjoyed the lesson and he enjoyed every process of learning English, and he had positive feeling toward English class at school. In addition, he said that he had become more proficient in English and this increased his confidence and was able to complete the assigned tasks well.

Extract 2

"The dearth of speaking partners is a difficulty in learning English" (Source: 1, line 6-7, participant)

Extract 3

"Among other subjects, English is a favorite due to the English teacher's cheerfulness and passion for her occupation" (Source: transcript 1 line 10-11, participant)

From the data presented above, Participant expressed their disappointment because they felt they could not communicate with their friends at school using English. This can happen because many students at school felt that English is difficult. Sometimes, this condition happens because of the bullying trends among teenagers. As the effect, they feel ashamed to make mistake in having conversation. However, on the other side the Participant stated that his English teacher was greatly admired because the teacher was 'fun' where young people used this interjection for the one they admired. This fact also proves that a great teacher contributes a positive vibe to the students in learning any kinds of subjects including English language. From the two data above,

it seems that the participant had little bit negative feelings toward having partner for practice English at school sometimes and he had positive feelings toward teacher.

Extract 4

“I sometimes make a joke about the class's non-English-speaking classmates to cheer them up almost all of the students in the class at least understand the basic of English,” (Source: Transcript 1 line 6-7, participant)

Extract 5

“I am extremely proud to be a part of this school, we feel delighted to study here, and we take good care of all facilities at the school” (Source: Transcript 1, participant).

The participant exposed that his friends in his class were fun because he could joke with them. This shows that the friendly atmosphere at school can make him think positively. The participant affectively engaged with English language learning. The participant had positive feelings toward English class at school, positive sense of belonging at school because he was interested, Enjoy full and had high Self-confident in learning English. However, sometimes he had disappointed toward friends because they do not have English vibes for practicing English.

2. Cognitive Engagement: Learning strategies inextricably bound to cognition

In data analysis and the researcher intends to analyze the data in order to answer the research questions. The research question in this research is “How did the successful millennial as an English language learner cognitively engage with English language learning?”

Extract 6

“Playing games and taking lessons is the first step in my strategy for learning English. I also have access to technology like smartphones, blackberry, and I Pad. At that time, I download games from smartphones to evaluate my Basic English abilities. I keep up with technological advancements very well. The pace of technological advancement was not as quick as it is now. To enhance English classes, I also download the English for Kids app. But because it had been so long ago, I'd forgotten the app (laughs). As there was no Wi-Fi at that time I had to arrange an appointment in person to communicate with classmates before so if I wanted to learn English” (source: transcript 1)

The participant stated that there were some efforts he made to study English subject. First, He took a private course at one of the well-known English Language Institutes in the city of Padang. Second, because the participant is a millennial, he is very familiar with the use of technology and the internet which also helps him in learning English. Hence, he used the sources from internet to enrich his knowledge in learning English.

Extract 7

“I had a target to learn 30 new words in a day and made sentences to remember it. Playtime beat learning time for children (laugh). Because I have been living in Germany for a while, I could attest to the consistency of language

instruction there. Students are required to use the language every day. In my experience, even after studying grammar for a year, I was still unable to comprehend it yet. After spending two months living in Germany; I was able to speak the language easily. The conclusion is that we have to continuously practice it every day.” (Source: Transcript 1, line 38-41, Participant)

The participant has a self-regulation strategy even though he is a bit overwhelmed in carrying it out because he is still influenced by the desire to play. It is proved by his statement on transcript above which states that he always has target to learn vocabulary around 30 new words a day. Besides, the participant strongly believes that to be able to speak English he needs to practice.

Extract 8

“English is my favorite subject to learn, so I do not even think it's a difficult subject to understand if you use a dictionary or an online dictionary like Alpha link [electronic dictionary] to translate difficult words (Source: Transcript,13/8/22)

The participant indirectly stated that he had done problem-solving when there were problems in learning English and because he was a millennial; he used technology to solve the problem, such as online learning. Because he has a strong commitment in learning, he can face any barriers.

DISCUSSION

Affective Engagement in Learning English Language

The detailed story of an English language learner named "AH" who achieved

success has provided insight into the process of student engagement with language learning tasks, context, and goals, whereby the learner's affective and cognitive engagement were dynamically linked and entwined. The finding of this study related to emotional involvement is another name for affective engagement (Skinner, Furrer, Marchand, & Koindermann, 2008) which refers to feelings of interest in learning and appreciation of the educational environment and activities for potential future achievement (Finn & Zimmer, 2012), in addition to opinions about academics, teachers, and classmates (Connel, 1990).

The findings of this study show that the successful millennial is affectively involved in learning English and dealing with his explanation that he has studied English since childhood until now. When he was in secondary school he had Positive feelings toward English class at school. The participant revealed that he enjoyed every process of learning English, and also he had positive feeling toward English class at school. In addition, he said that he had become more proficient in English and it is increased his confidence. Also, he was able to complete the assigned tasks well. Participant expressed his disappointment because he felt they could not communicate with their friends at school using English. This can happen because many students at school feel that English is difficult. Then, the Participant stated that his English teacher was greatly admired because it was 'fun' where young people used this interjection for the one they admired. He had negative feelings toward friends at school sometimes and he had positive feelings toward teacher. The participant had a positive sense of belonging at school, as we know that Senior High school 2 is the most famous senior high school in Padang city. The findings of this study are similar with previous studies that investigated a study about an in-depth

analysis of an individual learner's engagement with language (Zhang, 2020), he states that someone's motivation give a big contribution to the success in learning language. Then, the willingness of the participant in learning English and doing the task proves that he has affective engagement in learning English. It supported by (Skinner, Furrer, Marchand, & Koindermann, 2008) who state that affective engagement refers to the feeling of involvement to the school context and activities.

Cognitive Engagement in Learning English Language

The second discussion of this study presented that the participant cognitively involved it is related to in learning English language, it is related to the term "cognitive engagement" refers to actions that go above and beyond the basic essentials (Finn & Zimmer, 2012). Such activities include pursuing difficult task going further than the assigned readings, exerting effort to understand difficult concepts, and showing desire to understand difficult material (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). They also add that Cognitive involvement is also characterized by the use of self-regulation techniques. the participant stated that he had Strategies in learning English such as; Extra English class at one of the well-known English Language Institutes in the city of Padang, using available technologies, using Internet, and also the Participant had a self-regulation strategy, like Set daily learning target, each day, these participants practice speaking English with their family and friends as well as at school. There was additional effort he made as problem solving for his English problems. The participant mentioned that because he was a millennial, he had used technology to deal with challenges when he had faced them while learning English. The findings of this study also suggest making additional efforts

for English subjects, paying attention to behaviors that show persistence and effort beyond the minimum requirements, persevering in doing difficult tasks, reading more than the given material, expending energy to understand ideas that are presented. Complex and shows a willingness to understand difficult texts, using self-regulation strategies. However, having enough facilities and support from family could not be ignored in getting success in learning language.

Dealing with this research, shortly, there are some ways of the millennial to engage in learning language affectively and cognitively. In affective ways, the participant is interested in learning English, feeling enjoyable in learning English, having high self-confidence and getting external motivation from the teacher who has a cheerful personality. Meanwhile, in cognitive engagement, the participant take English course, playing and download games as the additional sources in learning English. Also, the participant uses technology to support his English, such as electronic dictionary. Then, he also has own target to improve his English in affectively and cognitively by pushing himself to memorize thirty vocabulary every single day. This narrative story can inspire the teenagers to engage with English language learning.

CONCLUSION

This study presents the argument that it is important to look at the construction of successful millennial engagement in order to understand how they approach and succeed in their language learning based on studies on effective language learners. It is important to remember that through narrative inquiry of the individual learning experience, rich and detailed descriptions of individual characteristics and contextual factors can offer insightful information into the complexity of learning English, even though

this is a case study on a single learner and may not be easily generalized to other contexts. Because the tripartite theoretical model successfully combines how language learners behave, feel, and think when engaging with learning objectives, activities, and environment, applying the concept of learner engagement to the study may be more significant. This study has examined the multifaceted construct of learner engagement that also encompasses essential points in language learning, instead of focusing on a single set of learner characteristics such as aptitude, beliefs, and motivation, and shown that engagement is crucial to successful English language learning. Shortly, the result of this research provides information and also motivation for everyone who wants to learn English successfully even though they do not belong to English language learners. However, it is necessary to conduct next research related to narrative inquiry of the individual learning experience in learning English with numerous participants in order to find as much as information for the readers who wants to success in learning English.

REFERENCES

- B.M.Tsui, A. (2011). Complexities of Identity Formation: A Narrative Inquiry of EFL Teachers. *TESOL*.
- Clandinin, D. J. (2016). *Engaging in Narrative Inquiry*. New York: Routledge.
- Connel, J. (1990). Context, Self, and Action: A motivational analysis of self-system process across the life span. In D. C. (Eds), *The Self in Transition: Infancy to childhood* (pp. 61-97). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Dornyei, Z. (2005). *The Psychology of the Language Learner*. New York: Routledge.
- Finn, J., & Zimmer, K. (2012). Student Engagement: What is it? Why Does it Matter?. In Christen Reschly, A, Wylie, C. (eds) *Handbook of Reserach on Student Engagement*. In R. W. Christenson S., *Handbook of Reserach on Student Engagement*. Boston: Springer.
- Fredricks, J. A., Blumenfeld, P. C., & Paris, A. H. (2004). School Engagement: Potential of Concept, State of Evidence. *Review of Educational Reserach*, 59-109.
- Garrett, P., & Young, R. F. (2009). Theorizing Affect in Foreign Language Learning: An Analysis of One Learner's Responses to a Communicative Portuguese Course. *Modern Language Journal*, 1-19.
- Griffiths, C. (2018). *The Strategy Factor in Successful Language Learning: The Tornado Effect*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Jealo, M. L. (2005). Language Learning Strategies. *Cuadernos de Languas Modernas*, 155-244.
- Masoud Gholamali Lavasani, F. F. (2011). Language learning strategies and suggested model in adults processes of learning second language. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 1-7.
- Ng, E. S., Schweitze, L., & Lyons, S. (2012). *Managing the New Workforce: International Perspectives on the Millennial Generation*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited.
- Oxford, R. (2016). Language learning styles and strategies : An Overview. In R. Oxford, *Language Learning Styles and Strategies* (pp. 1-21). Bermingham: University of Alabama at Bermingham.
- Rubin, J. (1975). What the "Good Language Learners" Can Teach Us. *TESOL*, 41-51.
- Scott, K. W., & Howell, D. (2008). Clarifying Analysis and

- Interpretation in Grounded Theory: Using a Conditional Relationship Guide and Reflexive Coding Matrix. *International Journal of Qualitative Method*, 1-15.
- Skinner, E., Furrer, C., Marchand, G., & Koindermann, T. (2008). Engagement and Disaffection in the Classroom: Part of Larger Motivational Dynamic? *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 1-18.
- Squire, C., Andrews, M., & Tamboukou, M. (2013). *Doing Narrative Inquiry 2nd Edition*. Los Angeles: SAGE.
- Stern, H. (1975). What Can We Learn from the Good Language Learner? *Journal of University of Toronto Press*, 304-319.
- Strauss, A. L., & Corbin, J. M. (1998). *Basics of Qualitative Research : Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*. London: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Thomas, N. (2019). *The Strategy Factor in Successful Language Learning: The Tornado Effect (2nd ed)*. Carol Griffiths. *Multilingual Matters*. Bristol: University College London.
- Toohy, B. N. (2011). Identity, language learning, and social change. *Language Teaching Journal*, 412-446.
- Zhang, V. Z. (2020). Language Engagement and Language Learning: a narrative inquiry of successful language learner. *The Language Learning Journal*, 1-16.