



Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development

**A SURVEY ON PREPARATORY ENGLISH 1
UNDERGRADUATES' PERCEPTUAL LEARNING STYLE
PREFERENCES AND THEIR INSTRUCTORS' TEACHING
STYLES**

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Bachelor of Education with Honours
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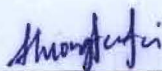
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**A SURVEY ON PREPARATORY ENGLISH 1 UNDERGRADUATES'
PERCEPTUAL LEARNING STYLE PREFERENCES AND
THEIR INSTRUCTORS' TEACHING STYLES**

by

**HUONG FEI FEI
(12015)**

This project is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a
Bachelor of Education with Honours
(Teaching English as a Second Language)

Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SARAWAK
2008

The project entitled **A Survey on Preparatory English 1 Undergraduates' Perceptual Learning Style Preferences and their Instructors' Teaching Styles** was prepared by **Huong Fei Fei** and submitted to the Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a Bachelor of Education with Honours (Teaching English as a Second Language).

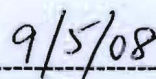
This study aims to investigate the perceptual learning style preferences of undergraduates in Preparatory English 1, semester 1, Session 2007/2008 and their instructors' teaching styles. The objectives of the study are to investigate the undergraduates' learning styles and their instructors' teaching styles, as well as the relationship between the learning and teaching styles. Six types of learning/teaching styles were being investigated in this study, namely visual, tactile, auditory, kinesthetic, group and individual styles. 541 undergraduates' perceptual learning styles preference in terms of gender, race, and streams of study, and 24 instructors' teaching styles were investigated and the data were collected through questionnaires. The survey results showed that auditory learning style was the undergraduates' major learning style. The statistical tests revealed that the undergraduates' preference on the learning style was not influenced by their gender and streams of study. However, there was a significant difference in undergraduates' preference on tactile, auditory, kinesthetic and group learning styles based on race. The findings of the study revealed that kinesthetic and group learning styles were highly preferred by the instructors. Therefore, it is suggested that there was no significant relationship between the teaching styles and learning styles. The issue of students' learning style preferences may imply that there is a need for the instructors to be more aware of themselves to be more aware on the students' differences in order to achieve successful learning.

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ABSTRACT

A SURVEY ON PREPARATORY ENGLISH 1 UNDERGRADUATES' PERCEPTUAL LEARNING STYLE PREFERENCES AND THEIR INSTRUCTORS' TEACHING STYLES

Huong Fei Fei

This study aims to investigate the perceptual learning style preferences of undergraduates in Preparatory English 1 course in Semester 1, Session 2007/2008 and their instructors' teaching styles. The objectives of the study are to investigate the undergraduates' learning styles and their instructors' teaching styles, as well as the relationship between the teaching and learning styles. Six types of learning/teaching styles were being investigated in this study, namely visual, tactile, auditory, kinesthetic, group and individual styles. 541 undergraduates' perceptual learning styles preference in terms of gender, races, and streams of study, and 24 instructors' teaching styles were investigated and the data were collected through questionnaires. The survey results showed that auditory learning style was the undergraduates' major learning styles. The statistical tests revealed that the undergraduates' preference on the learning styles was not influenced by their gender and streams of study. However, there was a significant difference in undergraduates' preference on tactile, auditory, kinesthetic and group learning styles based on races. The findings of the study revealed that kinesthetic and group learning styles were highly preferred by the instructors. Therefore, it suggested that there was no significant relationship between the teaching styles and learning styles. The issue of mismatch was found in the classrooms. The findings may imply that there is a need for the instructors and the undergraduates themselves to be more aware on the existence of differences in learning in order to achieve successful learning.

ABSTRAK

KAJIAN TENTANG PREFERENSI KESUKAAN GAYA PEMBELAJARAN MAHASISWA-MAHASISWI PREPARATORY ENGLISH 1 DAN GAYA PENGAJARAN PENGAJAR-PENGAJAR MEREKA

Huong Fei Fei

Kajian ini bertujuan menyiasatkan preferensi kesukaan gaya pembelajaran 541 orang mahasiswa-mahasiswi dalam Kelas Preparatory English 1 Kemasukan Semester 1, Session 2007/2008, dan gaya pengajaran 24 orang pengajar. Kajian ini juga bertujuan menyiasatkan hubungan antara stail pengajaran pengajar dan gaya pembelajaran mahasiswa-mahasiswi. Enam jenis gaya pembelajaran/pengajaran yang telah disiasat dalam kajian ini termasuk visual, sentuhan, pendengaran, kinestetik, belajar secara berkumpulan dan individu. Faktor jantina, bangsa, dan sungai-sungai pembelajaran mahasiswa-mahasiswi telah dipertimbangkan dalam mengkaji gaya pembelajaran utama mereka. Data telah diperolehi melalui cara soal selidik. Hasil kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa gaya pendengaran adalah stail pembelajaran utama mahasiswa-mahasiswi. Ujian-ujian statistik menunjukkan bahawa jantina dan aliran pembelajaran tidak mempengaruhi pemilihan gaya pembelajaran utama mereka. Walau bagaimanapun, didapati bahawa prefensi mahasiswa-mahasiswi dari segi sentuhan, pendengaran, kinestetik dan pembelajaran berkumpulan dipengaruhi oleh bangsa. Penemuan kajian mendedahkan bahawa stail kinestetik dan pembelajaran kumpulan lebih disukai oleh pengajar-pengajar. Dengan ini, dibuktikan bahawa tiada hubungan di antara gaya-gaya pengajaran dan pembelajaran yang seterusnya membangkitkan isu ketidakpadanan dalam proses pengajaran dan pembelajaran. Penemuan ini boleh mengimplikasikan bahawa para pengajar dan mahasiswa harus menyedari tentang kewujudan perbezaan dalam gaya pembelajaran untuk mencapai kecemerlangan dalam proses pembelajaran.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ESL	English as Second Language
EFL	English as Foreign Language
MUET	Malaysian University English Test
PBI 0011	Preparatory English 1
PLS	Perceptual Learning Style
PLSP	Perceptual Learning Style Preferences
PLSPQ	Perceptual Learning Style Preferences Questionnaire
UNIMAS	Universiti Malaysia Sarawak

1.0 Chapter Overview

This chapter discusses the background of the study, statement of research problem, research objectives, research questions, significance of the study, operational definition of terms, scope of the study and finally, the chapter review.

1.1 Background of the Study

Learning institutions educate students become who take in and comprehend information in different manner. People respond differently because people perceive differently using the sensory channels through which they give, receive, and store information. In other words, before information can be comprehended, it must be perceived effectively. According to Zepheria and Doherty (2011), how well a person absorbs and retains information depends on how the information was perceived by the person's preferred learning style. One can find a learning style associated with each type of learner, even those who prefer to learn using more than one style. Each style is different. Some of these learning styles have been found to be more effective than others. Some of these learning styles have been found to be more effective than others. Some of these learning styles have been found to be more effective than others. Some of these learning styles have been found to be more effective than others.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Chapter Overview

This chapter discusses the background of the study, statement of research problem, research objectives, research questions, significance of the study, operation definition of terms, scope of the study and finally, the chapter review.

1.1 Background of the Study

In learning institutions, educators encounter learners who take in and comprehend information in different manners. People respond differently because people perceive differently using the sensory channels through which they give, receive, and store information. In other words, before information can be remembered, it must be perceived effectively. According to Zapalska and Dabb (2002), how well a person absorbs and retains information depends on how the information was perceived in the person's preferred learning styles (as cited in Kratzig & Arbuthnott, 2006). For instance, some learn by seeing with pictorial or other visual stimuli, such as diagrams, charts or maps whereas others learn by hearing, with spoken stimuli such as lectures; some prefer to learn individually, while others enjoy interaction and relationship with their peers.

On the other hand, instructors teach in different ways and use different teaching methods. The teaching styles may be classified as visual, auditory, group, kinesthetic, individual and tactile teaching styles. Teaching styles are the personal attributes of a teacher. They vary from one teacher to another. Some instructors prefer lecturing or put up carefully designed overheads on the screen while others prefer discussion; some focus on deductive and others use inductive, some emphasize memory and others understanding. However, there is a tendency whereby the instructors teach in the manner with which they are most comfortable or the way they were taught (Oxford & Lavine, 1992; Cheng & Banya, n.d.).

Knowing a learner's perceptual learning style preferences is the first step to a more personalized approach to him or her or to a more learner-oriented approach towards language learning, and it is the first step to promote greater educational productivity. Moreover, it helps the learners to target and adapt to styles. However, most of the instructors are not aware of the existence of their learners' differences in language learning preferences. For instance, many studies have been done to investigate perceptual learning style preferences (Park, 2002; Peacock, 2001; Lin & Shen, 1996; Reid, 1987) and teaching styles (Thang & Wong, 2005; Stapa, 2003; Peacock, 2001; Soliven, n.d.).

Research studies (Abdolmehdi Riazi & Mohammad Javad Riasati, 2007; Chiya, 2003; Peacock, 2001; Oxford & Lavine, 1992; Cheng & Banya, n.d.) have also pointed out the problems associated with mismatches between the learning styles of students in a class and the teaching styles of an instructor. The studies have found that a serious mismatch can occur between learners' learning styles and instructors teaching styles which is said to have a negative effect on learners (Peacock, 2001; Felder, 1996, 1995; Reid, 1987). Peacock (2001) has proven that mismatch between teaching styles and learning styles will result in ineffective learning, and hence cause demotivation as well as frustration among the learners. The learners may become bored and inattentive in class, which may eventually lead to the cases of changing to other curricula or drop out of the course. Hence, to achieve a desired learning outcome, instructors should provide teaching styles

or methods which are compatible and in line with the ways through which learners like to learn the language.

According to Reid (1987), the different ways of how a learner takes in and processes information are collectively referred to as learning styles or learning preferences. The statement is supported by Felder (1995) that the ways in which an individual characteristically acquires, retains, and retrieves information are collectively termed as the individual's learning style. Keefe (1979) has defined learning styles as "cognitive, affective, and physiological traits that are relatively stable indicators of how learner perceive, interact with, and respond to the environment" (as cited in Reid, 1987). Reid (1995) defines learning style as "natural, habitual, and preferred way(s) of absorbing, processing, and retaining new information and skills". Sarasin (1998) defines learning styles as "the preference or predisposition of an individual to perceive and process information in a particular way or combination of ways" (as cited in "Learning style," n.d.).

James and Gardner (1995) divides learning styles into dimensions, namely perceptual, cognitive, and affective (as cited in Brown, 1998) while Reid (1995) divides learning styles into three major categories, namely cognitive learning styles, sensory learning styles, and personality learning styles. According to Merriam and Caffarella (1991, as cited in Brown, 1998) and Woolfolk (2004), cognitive learning styles are the information processing habits which represent a person's typical modes of perceiving, thinking, remembering, problem solving and decision making. Swanson (1995) claims that the affective dimension of learning encompasses "all aspects of personality, with personality traits at the core initiating the evolutionary process of learning" (as cited in Brown, 1998).

Dunn (1983) states that perceptual learning styles can be defined as a term which describes "the variations among learners in using one or more senses to understand, organise, and retain experience in the environment" (as cited in Reid, 1987). The four basic perceptual learning channels or modalities in learning English language are visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile learning (Reid,

1987). Visual learners learn more effectively through the eyes (seeing), while auditory learners learn more effectively through the ears (hearing). On the other hand, kinesthetic learners prefer learning through body experience, which is total physical involvements with a learning happening, while tactile learners learn more effectively when they have the opportunity to do hands-on activities.

However, for the purpose of this study, Reid's (1987) four perceptual learning modalities which comprise visual, auditory, tactile, and kinesthetic learning style, and two social learning styles comprising individual and group learning, were used.

1.2 Statement of Research Problem

Educational institutions in Malaysia have always focused on promoting the quality of English language programmes for their respective students to enhance their ability to communicate fluently in English. As far as government policy is concerned, English is viewed as vital for the nation's growth. Therefore, it is important for Malaysian citizens to master the language as it is crucial for us who wish to access the global community for economic development to have access to it.

In Malaysia, English is taught as a second language (L2) in line with its status as the second language in the country. Learners are taught to extend their English language proficiency in order to meet their needs for English in everyday life, for knowledge acquisition and for future workplace. Moreover, in recent years, there is a shift from teacher-centred to a learner-oriented approach towards language learning and teaching. Learners' needs and interests were taken into consideration in designing a course. Bearing in mind the influence of different social and cultural factors on how language learners learn, a study of their language learning styles may make educators more aware of their needs and may provide an insight for the instructors in designing a more effective and efficient language course.

However, there is a lack of intensive researches conducted to investigate students' English language learning preferences and lecturers' teaching style in Malaysian tertiary education context (Norzila Abdul Razak, Fauziah Ahmad & Parilah Mohd Shah, 2007; Ong, Shakina Crystal Rajendram & Mohd. Suffian Md. Yusof, 2006; Stapa, 2003), particularly in the multicultural and languages context, in which most of the students have their first language rather than English (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2003). Hence, it is crucial to look into how students prefer to learn as it is the key to educational improvement.

Therefore, the investigated problem in this study was the perceptual learning style preferences (PLSP) of students taking Preparatory English 1 course and their instructors' teaching style(s).

1.3 Research Objectives

The objectives of the study were to:

- i. investigate the perceptual learning style preferences of undergraduates taking Preparatory English 1;
- ii. investigate the instructors' teaching styles;
- iii. find out the association between Preparatory English 1 undergraduates' perceptual learning style preferences and their instructors' teaching styles.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What were the perceptual learning styles of undergraduates in Preparatory English 1 classrooms?
2. What were the undergraduates' perceptual learning style preferences based on gender?
3. What were the undergraduates' perceptual learning style preferences based on races (Malay, Chinese, Indian and others)?
4. What were the undergraduates' perceptual learning style preferences based on Science and Art stream?

5. What were the instructors' teaching styles in Preparatory English 1 classrooms?
6. Were the instructors' teaching styles correspond with the undergraduates' perceptual learning style preferences?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The significance of the study is to highlight to the educators and administrators on the existence of differences in learning among learners. According to Hood (1995), learning is an interactive process and it is the product of the student and the teacher's activity within a specific learning environment. However, Abdolmehdi Riazi and Mohammad Javad Riasati (2007) stated that most of the educators are not aware about the fact that learning is an interactive process. They tend to ignore the way(s) learners preferred to learn, or pay little attention to them even if they realise the differences in learners' learning styles (Abdolmehdi Riazi & Mohammad Javad Riasati, 2007). Therefore, it is hoped that by carried out this study, the instructors are aware of their learners' differences, especially in learning English language, and try to accommodate to their preferences if it is possible.

Stapa (2003) and Rao (2001) claimed that if educators are to successfully address the needs of the individual, they have to understand what "individual" means and relate their teaching style to learning style. Rao (2001) further stated that it is important for the teachers to be aware of their learners' needs, capacities, potentials and learning style preferences in meeting these needs so as to achieve effective teaching and learning. However, among the most frequent problems in the educational process is the mismatch between the instructors' teaching styles and the learning styles of their students (Oxford & Lavine, 1992). When mismatches exist between learning styles of the learners and the teaching styles of the teacher, learners may become bored and distracted in class, doing poorly on tests, and get discouraged about the courses and themselves (Peacock, 2001; Felder, 1996, 1995; Oxford & Lavine, 1992; Reid, 1987). This is due to the fact that teaching styles are greatly influenced by educators' perceptions of how they

think their learners prefer to learn and matching or mismatching learners' learning styles with instructional techniques affects learning significantly. Identification of learners' preferred perceptual learning styles enable lecturers to take a further step of teaching learners about learning styles that help them to learn the subject effectively (Stapa, 2003; Rao, 2001; Felder, 1996). On the other hand, identifying the modes in which learners learn best also helps them to understand and be aware of how they themselves learn and study best.

A mismatch between learning styles and teaching styles is a crucial factor in hindering learners' learning unless they have strong external motivation for studying. Hence, it is hoped that the study can create awareness for both the undergraduates and the instructors. A better understanding of language learners can have a beneficial effect on the process of attempting to help them in learning English as a second language. Learners are hoped to be able to identify how they learn the best and at the same time, the instructors are aware of their learners as an individual, their differences and their preferred ways of learning so that they are able to get the insight on ways to design the activities that cater the learners' needs effectively by developing coping strategies to compensate for the learners' weaknesses and then capitalize on their strengths. It might help the undergraduates to build up their language foundation and foster their language proficiency. On the other hand, it helps the educators and administrators to think more about their roles in facilitating learners' learning and to be more effective in their career.

1.6 Operation Definition of Terms

1.6.1 Perceptual Learning Style Preferences (PLSP)

Dunn (1983) defines perceptual learning style preferences as a term that describes the variations among learners in using one or more senses to understand, organize, and to retain experience (as cited in Reid, 1987). Hence, it can be defined that perceptual learning styles are the means by which learners extract

information from their surroundings through the use of their five senses. Reid (1987) has distinguished four perceptual learning modalities - visual learning, auditory learning, kinesthetic learning, and tactile learning, and two social learning styles – individual and group learning.

For the purpose of this study, perceptual learning style preferences are defined as the preferred sensory channels which students receive and process information efficiently. The perceptual learning style preferences include the four perceptual learning modalities, which are visual, auditory, tactile, and kinesthetic learning style, as well as two social learning styles, which are individual and group learning.

1.6.2 Teaching Styles

According to Salem (2001), teaching styles refer to the procedures or processes adopted and employed by a teacher to achieve the objectives of the day-to-day lesson (as cited in Soliven, n.d.). There are also views, certainty, and approaches or methods of an instructor on the attainment of maximum results in the teaching-learning process (Soliven, n.d.).

In this study, the teaching styles refer to the ways or methods that are used by an instructor in to carry out an English lesson, to transmit knowledge and information, and to help the learners to learn the language. The teaching styles are classified as visual, auditory, group, kinesthetic, individual and tactile teaching styles.

1.7 Scope of the Study

The study investigated on Preparatory English 1 undergraduates' perceptual learning style preferences and their instructors' teaching styles, and whether there is a match or mismatch between the teaching and learning styles.

Preparatory English 1 is a remedial course which is designed to build up the undergraduates' English foundation and to improve their English language proficiency. It is a compulsory generic course for the undergraduates whose MUET result was between Band 1 to Band 3. Hence, by involving the Preparatory English 1 undergraduates, it will help the undergraduates to identify the best ways which help them to learn the language and at the same time, provide an insight for the instructors in helping them to improve the undergraduates' English proficiency which is very crucial in tertiary education.

There are many factors or variables contributing to the language learning styles. However, due to the compressed time span, the study only investigated the undergraduates' perceptual learning style preferences as well as the variables which might affect their preferences – gender, races, and streams of study. The reason for investigating the mentioned variables is because the participants are of different cultural and education background. Therefore, these variables might produce different results when the study is carried out with different participants, and in different settings. According to Honigsfeld and Dunn (2003), "gender is one of the six characteristics that tend to differentiate among individuals' learning styles" (as cited in Payne & Monk-Turner, 2006). In terms of race, Romero (1991) stated that it is believed that race influences "the process of knowledge acquisition in classrooms" (as cited in Payne & Monk-Turner, 2006).

Besides, the study also investigated the instructors' teaching styles in Preparatory English 1 classrooms and comparing the instructors' teaching styles with their students' learning styles to examine the relationship between the teaching styles and learning styles.

1.8 Chapter Review

The chapter discussed the background of the study and the statement of the research problem. Besides, the chapter also discussed the aims and objectives of the study, which is to find out the perceptual learning style preferences of