LEARNING STYLE PREFERENCES OF IN-SERVICE 14 WEEKS COURSE TEACHERS

FADZILLAH BIN FADZIL

UNIVERSITI PENDIDIKAN SULTAN IDRIS
2006

LEARNING STYLE PREFERENCES OF IN-SERVICE 14 WEEKS COURSE TEACHERS

FADZILLAH BIN FADZIL

DISERTASI DIKEMUKAKAN BAGI MEMENUHI SYARAT UNTUK MEMPEROLEHI IJAZAH SARJANA PENDIDIKAN

2006

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work in this dissertation is my own except for quotations and summaries which have been duly acknowledged.

Date   : 7 April 2006.

Signature:
Name: Fadzillah bin Fadzil
Reg. No. : M20041000143

i

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

All praise is to Allah for bestowing me the strengths to complete my study and this project paper.

I would also like to extend my gratitude and my appreciation to my supervisor, Encik Abdul Ghani bin Abu, for his invaluable help and guidance rendered while completing this paper.

My sincere thanks to my colleagues and close friends for their support, assistance and cooperation in the course of completing this study.

Finally, my heartfelt gratitude and love to my wife and children who have been a great source of inspiration and motivation in my life.

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini meninjau gaya pembelajaran di kalangan guru-guru dalam perkhidmatan yang sedang mengikuti kursus 14 minggu di Institut Perguruan Darulaman, Jitra, Kedah Darul Aman.

Sejumlah 54 subjek telah dikenalpasti untuk mengikuti kajian ini. Versi adaptasi soal selidik 'Perceptual Learning Style Preferences' oleh Joy Reid (1984) telah digunakan untuk mengenalpasti jenis-jenis gaya pembelajaran subjek yang melihat kepada enam jenis gaya pembelajaran perceptual iaitu Gaya Pembelajaran Visual, Gaya Pembelajaran Auditori, Gaya Pembelajaran Kinesthetik, Gaya Pembelajaran Tactile, Gaya Pembelajaran Kumpulan dan Gaya Pembelajaran Individu.

Dapatan kajian telah diperolehi dengan menggunakan frekuensi dan peratus daripada 'Statistical Package of Social Sciences'(SPSS) Versi 12.0.

Keputusan kajian menunjukkan bahawa tidak ada korelasi yang signifikan antara gaya pembelajaran oleh kumpulan umur, opsyen dan jantina. Dapatan juga menunjukkan perbezaan antara gaya pembelajaran oleh kumpulan umur, opsyen dan jantina.

ABSTRACT

This study examines the learning styles among in-service teachers who are presently undergoing a 14 week course in Institut Perguruan Darulaman, Jitra, Kedah Darul Aman.

A number of 54 subjects took part in the study. An adapted version of Joy Reid's Perceptual Learning Style Preferences Questionnaire (1984) was used to identify the preferred learning styles of the subjects which looks at the six different perceptual learning styles namely; the Visual Learning Style Preference, the Auditory Learning Style Preference, the Kinesthetic Learning Style Preference, the Tactile Learning Style Preference, the Group Learning Style Preference and the Individual Learning Style Preference.

The result of the study was analyzed by using frequencies and percentages in the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 12.0.

The findings show that there is no significant correlation between learning style preferences by age groups, options and gender. The results also indicate there are differences in learning styles preferences by age groups, options and gender.

LIST OF TABLES

Page

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASI	:	Approaches to Study Inventory
ESL	:	English language Teaching
ELT	:	English Language Teaching
ETeMS	:	English in Teaching Mathematics and Science
ICT	:	Information Communication Technology
IPDA	:	*Institut Perguruan Darulaman*
MUET	:	Malaysian University English Test
PKPG	:	*Program Khas Pensiswazahan Guru*
RASI	:	Revise Approaches to Study Inventory
SPM	:	*Sijil Persekolahan Malaysia*
STPM	:	*Sijil Tinggi Persekolahan Malaysia*
SPSS	:	Statistical Package for Social Studies
TESL	:	Teaching English as a Second Language
UPSI	:	*Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

As the world moves into the new millennium, Malaysians anticipate differences in various aspects of life from the present situation. These differences will bring with them new standards to be achieved, greater adaptations to be done and new global demands to be met. In ensuring their own survival, Malaysians need to prepare themselves for the challenges to come.

Being conscious of the rapidly changing global trends, Malaysians realized the urgent need to pursue knowledge and education. This leads to the increasing number of higher institutions offering various courses in various disciplines to those Malaysians who are having the urge to pursue knowledge. Realizing this need, the Malaysian Ministry of Education is encouraging teachers to pursue their dreams in higher education in various fields to produce competent teachers and enable them to respond to global demands favourably and make greater   contributions to the development of the country.

In Malaysia, the provision for education is the biggest challenge for the government as the nation strives to become a fully developed country by the year 2020. Teachers need to equip and upgrade themselves in terms of knowledge and the latest approaches in the teaching-learning process.   One of the ways of assisting teachers of

upgrading their knowledge and skills for the purpose of career progression is by attending

the 14 weeks course in the selected teachers' training colleges throughout the nation.

1.1 Background of the Study

This study focuses on the learning styles preferred by a group of 54 in-service

teachers who are attending a 14 week course in Institut Perguruan Darulaman (IPDA), a

Teacher Training College in Kedah Darul Aman. These teachers are of different

educational background, qualifications, age and gender. However, most of them are *Sijil*

Persekolahan Malaysia (SPM) and *Sijil Tinggi Persekolahan Malaysia* (STPM) holders.

Out of these 54 teachers, only one of them is an English optionist, teaching English

Language in a primary school in the District of Kota Star, Kedah Darul Aman. In the

duration of their course in IPDA, the teachers have to sit for two subjects in English

namely 'English for Oral Communication' and 'English for Written Communication'. At

the end of the course, the teachers have to submit a written assignment for each subject

and sit for a written examination for both subjects mentioned.

This study aims to look at the learning styles of these 54 in-service teachers when

they are learning these two subjects in English. It is believed that a better understanding

of learning styles among learners would contribute greatly towards the improvement of

learning and teaching strategy among lecturers in teaching the subjects to the in-service

teachers in future.

Keefe (1979) cited in Donnely (1990) emphasized that effectiveness in teaching and learning can be improved if teachers understand the learning styles of their learners. Keefe also added that educational improvement could be enhanced by an understanding of how learners learn and by focusing on the learners' learning styles as the key to an understanding of learners' learning.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Under the former leadership of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohammed and the present Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, the government of Malaysia has shown great concern over the mastery and usage of the English Language as English is becoming more useful and relevant in this new millennium. This concern can be seen through the introduction of the Malaysian University English Test (MUET) and the use of English in teaching Mathematics and Science (ETeMS) beginning in 2003.

The Malaysian University English Test is a compulsory university entrance English test which is administered twice annually by the Malaysian Examination Council. The test covers all the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing.

The year 2003 witnessed one of the most significant changes in the education system in Malaysia – the policy to teach Mathematics and Science in English. The policy was conceived mainly to enhance the learners' knowledge in Mathematics and Science through a grasp of the English language.

In the teachers' training colleges, a new English syllabus was also introduced to uplift the status of the subject and to instill in students the importance of mastering and using the English Language competently and appropriately. In the teachers' training colleges, from the classroom observation has revealed that there are students who appeared to be restless, inactive and lack of motivation in learning the English Language. Some kinds of measures should be taken to overcome the problems and to allow these students to enjoy and motivate them in learning the subject. It was then decided that learning styles would be an area that could be looked into to try to attain answers to overcome the problems faced by these students.

This study therefore seeks to discover if learning styles is to be a considerable factor for the English Language lecturers when planning their lessons to accommodate the diverse learning styles of their learners.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify the types of learners' preferred learning styles among the in-service teachers who are undergoing a 14 week course in Institut Perguruan Darulaman. This study will also bring about the desired awareness among the teachers who are attending courses to adopt an effective style of learning.

1.4   Research Objectives

This study sets its objectives as follows:

a.   To identify the learning styles preferred by the in-service teachers when attending the 14 week course

b.   To examine the learning styles preferred by the in-service teachers according to the age group, options and gender.

1.5 Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following questions:

1.5.1   What are the learning styles preferred by the in-service teachers attending the 14 week course at Institut Perguruan Darulaman when learning English?

1.5.2   What are the learning styles preferred by the in-service teachers attending the 14 week course when learning English according to:

a.   Age group

b.   Options

c.   Gender

1.6 Significance of Study

The results of the study will bring about the desired awareness among the in-service teachers of the need for them to adopt an effective learning style when they are attending courses as many teachers are often unaware of the different learning styles that can lead them to effective learning. For lecturers, the knowledge on their learners' learning styles would benefit them as it allows lecturers to make adaptations and improvisations wherever possible on the teaching materials and techniques to be used in their teachings, as suggested by some researchers.

Reid (1995) suggested that teachers identify students' learning styles and try to teach them to these styles. On most occasions, teachers use teaching styles that directly reflect their students' learning styles. When teachers make an effort to minimize clashes of styles between themselves and the learners, effective learning is likely to take place and may result in better performance by the learners.

Other than that, the results from the assessment or discovering the learning styles of the learners will also provide guidance to lecturers when conducting progress evaluation. Lecturers will be able to design a desirable form of evaluation that can cater to the various learning styles of the learners.

This study on the learning styles of learners can also benefit the syllabus designers as they can plan courses according to the learners' preferred learning styles.

Careful planning on the part of these syllabus designers can help the in-service teachers or learners to gain knowledge with less pain.

1.7 Definition of Terms

1.7.1 Learning Style Preferences

In this study the term learning style preferences as described by Reid (1995) are the visual learning style, auditory learning style, tactile learning style, group learning style, kinesthetic learning style and the individual learning style. The learning style preferences are measured using the 5 points scale.

1.7.2 In-service 14 weeks Course

The in-service 14 week course refers to an intensive course of 14 weeks attended by in-service teachers in the teachers' training colleges organized by the Teachers' Training Division, Ministry of Education.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

This study was carried out with 54 in-service teachers who are undergoing the 14 week course in Institut Perguruan Darulaman , Jitra, Kedah. The fact that this study only involved a limited group of participants within the population of other in-service teachers in other teachers' training colleges, it definitely prevents the findings to be generalized to

all in-service teachers who are attending the same programme in other teachers' training colleges throughout the nation.

Apart from that, this study only focuses on learning styles among the in- service teachers who are attending the 14 week course and not those attending short courses like the ETeMS course. Therefore, the findings from the study do not reflect the learning styles preferred by all the in-service teachers attending short courses in the teachers' training colleges.