

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1. Rationale of the Study

Failure in learning the English language in Thailand results from many causes, some of which may be inherent in certain places where the learning takes place while some are more general in characteristics. At Songkhla Business Administration College, many students are not successful in learning English and some of them have to retake the same courses when they fail. What are the reasons for this failure? On one hand, the students complain that the teachers have not taught well enough; therefore, it makes them unsuccessful in their study. The teachers, on the other hand, the teachers complain that the students are lazy, do not do their homework, have not reviewed what they have learned before taking tests, etc. However, in fact, there are many reasons which may contribute to their failure in learning English at Songkhla Business Administration College. First, some of the students with Non-formal Education background usually have little knowledge of English. Second, some of them have not been exposed to English from a young age. Third, they are low proficient learners who could not pass the test to enter the government schools. Fourth, they do not like English; they do not think that English is important to their lives and this causes them not to concentrate on their study. Fifth, they may want to learn English but their teachers do not teach them in the ways they would like to learn. This can make students fail in their learning because their learning styles do not match the teachers' teaching styles.

When compared with the first four reasons mentioned above, the last one is possibly a reason which has been less often focused on in SLA research. It is possible that a mismatch between learning and teaching styles may occur in any of the English classes where learners have different learning styles. In one class, there may be many students with different learning styles, such as *visual, auditory, tactile, kinesthetic, individual, and group* learning styles. These students will learn the language differently according to their learning styles and it is natural that they may learn more effectively when they learn through their own preferred ways. When their learning styles are matched appropriately with teaching approaches, their motivation will increase, which thus enhance and improve their performances, and achievements. (Brown, 2000). However, their teachers also come to class with different teaching styles which are as varied as their learning styles—*visual, auditory, tactile, kinesthetic, individual, and group* teaching styles. So, the students may not have a chance to learn the way they prefer and may not succeed in learning. Hence, it may be said that the success of language learning depends not only on the students but also on the teachers. The problem is, how we can make learning and teaching styles to compliment each other, because one usually does not know what learning styles students prefer and what teaching styles teachers prefer. It is important then, to investigate what the students' learning styles are, what the teachers' teaching styles are, whether the congruence between learning and teaching styles exists, and whether there is the relationship of the congruence between learning and teaching styles to the English language achievement. It is hoped that the findings will ultimately lead to proper language teaching and learning management, which will, in turn, result in optimal performance of the teachers and the students, and the most effective teaching and learning outcome.

2. Purposes of the Study

The study has four purposes:

- 2.1 to identify students' learning styles
- 2.2 to identify teachers' teaching styles
- 2.3 to determine the level of congruence between learning and teaching styles
- 2.4 to investigate the relationship of the congruence between learning and teaching styles to the English language achievement

3. Research Questions

The study attempts to investigate the relationship between learning and teaching styles and language achievement. Four research questions have been formulated as follow:

- 3.1 What are the learning styles of the students?
- 3.2 What are the teaching styles of the teachers?
- 3.3 Is there any congruence between the learning and teaching styles?
- 3.4 If there is congruence between the learning and teaching styles, is it related to the English language achievement?

4. Significance of the Study

Findings about the relationship between learning and teaching styles and language achievement will be beneficial and valuable for teachers of English. It may make teachers aware of the importance of the relationship between learning and teaching styles in learning and teaching process. If the findings of the study show the

relationship of the congruence between learning and teaching styles to students' achievement, teachers should then see the importance of learning and teaching styles congruence in the classroom. They would know and understand their learners better, and would try to adapt their teaching styles and plan their lessons to match the learning styles of a particular group of learners.

5. Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study aimed at investigating the students' learning styles, the teachers' teaching styles, the congruence between learning and teaching styles and the relationship of the congruence between learning and teaching styles to the English language achievement. The investigation was limited to twelve types of learning and teaching styles: analytic/global, reflective/impulsive, visual/auditory, tactile, kinesthetic, individual/group, and tolerant of ambiguity/intolerant of ambiguity, which were reflected in each stage of the observed classroom events under investigation. Specifically, the study focused on the congruence between students' learning styles and teachers' teaching styles in the course 01-320-206, the English course required for the fifth-year students at Songkhla Business Administration College in the second semester of 1999 academic year.

6. Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined based on Felder and Henriques (1995), Lightbown and Spada (1999), Nunan (1991), and Reid (1995).

- 1. Congruence of learning and teaching styles** refers to matching between the students' learning styles and their teachers' teaching styles classified into three levels: high match, moderate match, and low match, by the correlation coefficient values.

2. Learning styles refer to the students' preferred ways of learning English, which result from their personality, psychological and cognitive make-up, socio-cultural background, and educational experience. Learning styles investigated in this study include analytic/global, reflective/impulsive, visual/auditory, tactile, kinesthetic, individual/group, and tolerant of ambiguity/intolerant of ambiguity.

2.1 Analytic learning style is the style in which learners absorb information and acquire understanding of material from the step by step presentation. The learners with analytic learning style not only prefer clear instructions before doing any activity but also prefer to have clear conclusion of the lesson from their teachers.

2.2 Global learning style is the style in which learners learn through some examples besides those given in the textbook and through authentic materials, e.g., train timetables, menus, pictures, maps, etc.

2.3 Reflective learning style is the style in which learners learn well in situations that they have opportunities to think about the information being presented, have more time to think or consider options before responding, and have a chance to summarize the lesson by themselves.

2.4 Impulsive learning style is the style in which learners like to react or respond to what they do not understand immediately and would like to take risks during the learning.

2.5 Visual learning style is the style in which learners prefer that information be presented visually—in pictures, diagrams, flow charts, written signs on boards, films, and demonstrations—rather than in spoken words.

2.6 Auditory learning style is the style in which learners can learn best when the information is presented verbally rather than in written words. The learners with auditory learning style like to learn through songs.

2.7 Tactile learning style is the style in which learners learn best when they can manipulate things and have a chance to write, to draw, or to do a class project.

2.8 Kinesthetic learning style is the style in which learners have a chance to do role-play or some physical activities during the learning.

2.9 Individual learning style is the style in which learners prefer to do their exercises or homework by themselves and learn best when they work alone.

2.10 Group learning style is the style in which learners prefer to do any language activities with other students. The learners with group learning style learn best when they work in a pair or a group.

2.11 Ambiguity-tolerant learning style is the style in which learners prefer to learn in uncertain activities such as voluntary reading in the class or guessing meaning of unknown words.

2.12 Ambiguity-intolerant learning style is the style in which learners prefer less flexible, less risky, and more structured situations such as having Thai instructions rather than English or having their teachers tell the meaning of unknown words.

3. Teaching styles refer to the ways the teachers involved in this study teach their students, the subjects in this study. They include analytic/global, reflective/impulsive, visual/auditory, tactile, kinesthetic, individual/group, and tolerant of ambiguity/intolerant of ambiguity.

3.1 Analytic teaching style is the style in which the teachers present information or materials to their students step by step. The teachers with analytic teaching style not only give clear instructions before introducing any activity but also make clear conclusion of the lesson for their students.

3.2 Global teaching style is the style in which the teachers teach through some examples besides those given in the textbook and through authentic materials, e.g., train timetables, menus, pictures, maps, etc.

3.3 Reflective teaching style is the style in which the teachers provide their students with opportunities to think about the information being presented, give the

students more time to think or consider options before responding, and have them summarize the lesson at the end of the class.

3.4 Impulsive teaching style is the style in which the teachers have their students learn in situations that they can react or respond to that activity immediately and have a chance to take risks during the learning.

3.5 Visual teaching style is the style in which the teachers present information visually—in pictures, diagrams, flow charts, written signs on boards, films, and demonstrations—rather than in spoken words.

3.6 Auditory teaching style is the style in which the teachers present information verbally—in spoken words—rather than in written words. The teachers with auditory teaching style also prefer to teach through songs.

3.7 Tactile teaching style is the style in which the teachers teach by letting students manipulate things, giving them a chance to write, to draw, or to do a class project.

3.8 Kinesthetic teaching style is the style in which the teachers teach by role-playing or by some physical activities.

3.9 Individual teaching style is the style in which the teachers teach by letting their students do the exercises, homework or any activities alone.

3.10 Group teaching style is the style in which the teachers give their learners a chance to do any language activity with other students either in groups or in pairs.

3.11 Ambiguity-tolerant teaching style is the style in which the teachers have their students learn in uncertain activities such as voluntary reading in the class or guessing meaning of unknown words.

3.12 Ambiguity-intolerant teaching style is the style in which the teachers have their learners learn in less flexible, less risky, and more structured situations such as giving the students Thai instructions rather than English or telling them the meaning of unknown words.

4. English language achievement refers to the students' achievement of two courses. The difference between scores the students obtained in the course 01-320-205, in the first semester of 1999 academic year and those they obtained in the course 01-320-206, in the second semester of the same academic year was taken as the students' course related achievement.

5. Correlates of learning styles refer to the classification of the students' twelve learning styles into four groups based on Willing's types of learners (in Nunan 1991). These four groups or correlates of learning styles are analytic, concrete, communicative, and authority-oriented.

5.1 Correlate of analytic learning styles consists of analytic, reflective, and individual learning styles.

5.2 Correlate of concrete learning styles consists of visual, global, auditory, and tactile learning styles.

5.3 Correlate of communicative learning styles consists of group, kinesthetic, impulsive, and tolerant of ambiguity learning styles.

5.4 Correlate of authority-oriented learning styles consists of intolerant of ambiguity learning style.

6. Correlates of teaching styles refer to the classification of the teachers' twelve teaching styles into four groups like those of learning styles. These four groups or correlates of teaching styles are analytic, concrete, communicative, and authority-oriented.

6.1 Correlate of analytic teaching styles consists of analytic, reflective, and individual teaching styles.

6.2 Correlate of concrete teaching styles consists of visual, global, auditory, and tactile teaching styles.

6.3 Correlate of communicative teaching styles consists of group, kinesthetic, impulsive, and tolerant of ambiguity teaching styles.

6.4 Correlate of authority-oriented teaching styles consists of intolerant of ambiguity teaching style.

7. A profile of learning styles refers to the summary of the students' overall learning styles. It includes all four correlates of learning styles preferred by the students: analytic, concrete, communicative, and authority-oriented, as well as the proportion or the share of each correlate in the profile.

8. A profile of teaching styles refers to the summary of the teachers' overall teaching styles. It includes all four correlates of teaching styles practiced by the teachers: analytic, concrete, communicative, and authority-oriented, as well as the proportion or the share of each correlate in the profile.