EFL Learners' Learning Styles and Their Attributes

Luu Trong Tuan

National University of Ho Chi Minh City
E-mail: luutrongtuan@vnn.vn

Abstract *This research was conducted to examine EFL students' preferred learning styles, and linkages between learning style preferences and individual attributes such as fields of study, length of tertiary study, gender, age, learning language experience, and English proficiency level. 172 students were invited to participate in the questionnaire survey. The findings revealed that perceptual learning style preferences were impacted by some attributes, particularly fields of study and length of tertiary study. The dominant learning style preferences for the sample were kinesthetic and tactile. The higher levels of English EFL students got the more kinesthetic and tactile they appeared. Furthermore, the students with the shortest length of studying English tended to be those with a variety of preferred learning styles, except individual. As far as gender was concerned, females showed a stronger tendency toward kinesthetic while males gave more preference to tactile learning.*

Keywords*: learning style; field of study; length of tertiary study; gender; age; learning language experience;*

1. Introduction

The most important research endeavour and educational improvement, in recent years, is the shift from an emphasis on the language teaching methodology to language learners and variables that influence language learning. Mainstream language teaching no longer deems teaching methods to be the key factor in determining the success or failure of language teaching and learning (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Learners shape their own learning process enormously. The rise of individual difference research has brought forth new perceptions of the nature of learner differences. More and more researches have been conducted to handle individual differences in the learning process such as Bialystok (1979); Chapelle & Roberts (1986); Naiman, Frohlich, & Todesco (1975); Rubin (1975). These researches have centered much on such fundamental questions as what makes a good language learner and why some students develop proficiency more briskly and easily than others do. One of the causes is that there are considerable individual differences in language learning in terms of gender, age, social status, motivation, attitude, aptitude, and culture. What works for one learner might not work for another. There is the fact that students take in and comprehend information in different manners. Some prefer to learn individually whereas others prefer to interact with their peers. Some enjoy listening to lectures while others like to do more experiments. It is widely believed by numerous researchers (Kolb, 1984; Reid, 1987; Celce-Murcia, 2001) that the different ways of how a learner takes in and processes information are collectively referred to as learning styles or learning preferences.

While researchers and EFL teachers in several countries have discussed a great deal on the topics of learners' characteristic differences in learning English, and language learning styles have been one of the most popular aspects researchers have focused on; little attention has paid to this field in Vietnam. Up to now, only a few studies have been found. Some researchers such as Nguyen (1989), Dao (1982), and Le (1982) in their studies referred to learning strategies in general. Le (1999) studied the differences in language learning strategies of learners of English in Hue City and Nguyen (2005) investigated the different reading style preferences of the ESP students at Ton Duc Thang University. In other words, in Vietnam, the field of perceptual learning style preferences in language learning has been ignored in the learning process. The majority of the teachers are unaware of their students' learning styles. They are also unaware of

the importance to identify learning styles. Thus, there is a need to assess the learning styles of the students as well as other relevant variables such as gender, age, language experience, or English proficiency to accommodate different learners.

This study aims to explore students' perceptual learning style preferences as well as whether any linkages between language learning styles and such variables as field of study, study length, gender, age, language learning experience, and English proficiency level subsist.

2. Literature Review

This section looks at the various definitions of learning style, a framework for categorizing the types of instruments used to assess learning style, as well as prior researches on learning style.

2.1 Definitions of Learning Styles

A number of definitions for the term "learning style" can be found in the literature. In the earlier days of this type of research, the term "cognitive style" was used rather than learning style (Swanson, 1995). Cognitive style has been defined in numerous ways: (1) cognitive characteristic modes of functioning that are revealed through one's perceptual and intellectual activities in a highly consistent and pervasive way; (2) a super-ordinate construct involved in many cognitive operations that accounts for individual differences in a variety of cognitive, perceptual, and personality variables; and (3) intrinsic information processing patterns that represent a person's typical modes of perceiving, remembering, thinking, and problem solving (Claxton and Murrell, 1987; Griggs, 1991).

According to Kirby (1979) the term "learning style" came into use when researchers began looking for ways to combine course presentation and materials to match the needs of each learner. From this perspective, learning style is considered a broader term that includes the construct of cognitive style. Dunn and Dunn (1979, as cited in Reid, 1987) define learning styles as "a term that describes the variations among learners in using one or more senses to understand, organize, and retain experience" (p. 89).

Claxton and Ralston (1978) defined the term as a learner's "consistent way of responding and using stimuli in the context of learning" (p. 7). Later, Scarpaci and Fradd (1985) defined learning styles as "ways in which individuals perceive, organize, and recall information in their environment (p.184). For Keefe (1979), learning styles are "cognitive, affective, and physiological traits that are relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive, interact with, and respond to the learning environment" (p.4). Dun et al. (1989 as cited in Clenton, 2002) assert that learning styles include variables such as "individual responses to sound, light, temperature, design, perception, intake, chronobiological highs and lows, mobility needs, and persistence, …motivation, responsibility (conformity) and need for structure…" (p. 56). Ehrman & Oxford (1990, p. 311) define that learning styles are preferred or habitual patterns of mental functioning, and dealing with new information. Gregorc (1979, cited in Erhman & Oxford, 1993) states that learning styles are distinctive behaviors which serve as indicators of how a person learns from and adapts to his environments.

Reid (1995, p. xiii) asserts that learning styles have some fundamental characteristics on which they are based. The first is that every person, student and teacher alike, has a learning style, learning strengths and weaknesses. Learning styles exist on wide continuums although they are described as opposites- weaknesses. Furthermore, learning styles are value-neutral; that is, no one style is better than others. Therefore, students must be encouraged to stretch their learning styles so that they will be more empowered in a variety of learning situations. Often students' strategies are linked to their learning styles. Thus, teachers should allow their students to become aware of their learning strengths and weaknesses.

As it can be seen, the definitions provided above vary in terms of scope and depth. Currently, the involvement of several dimensions while defining learning styles leads to confusion since it is difficult to control and focus on all of them simultaneously. Thus, in this study, the definition provided by Dunn and Dunn (1979, p.89, as cited in Reid, 1987) "learning style is a term that describes the variations among learners in using one or more senses to understand, organize, and retain experience" will be taken as a basis.

2.2 Framework for Learning Style Categorization

Reid (1995) divides learning styles into three major categories: cognitive learning styles; sensory learning styles, and personality learning styles. Brown (2000) looks upon ambiguity tolerance as a style as well.

2.2.1 Cognitive Learning Styles

Field-independent vs. field-dependent

According to Swanson (1995), one model that has greatly impacted the field of learning style is Herman Witkins's (1976) construct of field dependence and filed independence, which measures the extent to which a person is influenced by a surrounding field. Field independent individuals, who are able to perceive the figures in the midst of the surrounding filed, function more autonomously since their reliance on internal referents allows them to structure situations on their own. On the other hand, field dependent or field sensitive people, who are unable to pick out the figures, are more influenced by and sensitive to their environment, including other people. They use their entire surroundings to process information. In class, for example, field sensitive students are as concerned about human relational interaction and communication style of the instructor as they are about the delivery of the content (Anderson and Adams, 1992; Griggs, 1991; Hvitfeldt, 1986).

Ramizer and Casraneda (1974) write that:

> In a field dependent mode of perception, the organization of the field as a whole dominates perception of its parts; an item within a field is experienced as fused with the organized ground. In a field independent mode of perception, the person is able to perceive items as discrete from the organized field. (p. 65)

Field independent learners readily separate key details from a complex or confusing background, while their field dependent peers have trouble doing this. For instance, field-independent learners tend to be analytical people; in language learning they tend to focus on form and accuracy; they look out for rules and patterns; they like to plan what they have to say or write; and they like abstract, impersonal, factual material. On the other hand, field-dependent learners tend to be synthetic people; in language learning they tend to focus on meaning and fluency; they collect examples of language use rather than form rules; they like to produce an oral or written text in a straightforward way, and later correct it if necessary; and they like material which is of a more concrete, human, social or artistic nature.

Analytic vs. global

Relevant to the learning style dimension of sensory strength is that of global/ analytic thinking. Research on the hemispheres of the brain suggests that we possess two different ways of processing information, global (spatial, relational), in the right hemisphere, and analytic (linear, step-by-step) in the left hemisphere. Global learners require an overall picture first. Analytic

learners, by contrast, piece the details together to form an understanding. The analytic learner move from one point to another in a step-by-step manner, while the global learner separates parts (Scarcella, 1990, p. 321).

Analytic learners plan and organize their work. They focus on details and are logical. They are phonetic readers and prefer to work individually on activity sheets. They learn best when information is presented in sequential steps; lessons are structured and teacher-directed; goals are clear; and requirements are spelled out.

Global learners, on the other hand, learn more effectively through concrete experience, and by interaction with other people. Global learners are spontaneous and intuitive. They do not like to be bored. Information needs to be presented in an interesting manner using attractive materials. Cooperative learning strategies and holistic reading methods work well with these learners. Global learners learn best through choral reading, recorded books, story writing, games, or group activities.

Reflective vs. impulsive

In language learning you can draw a basic distinction between students who are reflective and cautious, and so tend to remain within the task you set for them, and students who are impulsive and more prepared to take risks, to experiment with language, and so are more likely to go beyond the task. You can identify people who are, or tend to be, rather anxious, and thus are less tolerant of ambiguity, and people who tend to be relaxed, which allows them to tolerate ambiguity better. On one side, you may find people who tend to be inhibited, introverted, and perhaps a bit rigid; on the other side, people who tend to be uninhibited, extroverted, and maybe a bit more flexible.

Reflective learners learn more effectively when they have time to consider options before responding whereas impulsive learners are able to respond immediately and take risks.

2.2.2 Sensory Learning Styles

Oxford (2003) supposes that sensory preferences can be decomposed into four main areas: visual, auditory, kinesthetic (movement-oriented), and tactile (touch-oriented). Sensory preferences refer to the physical, perceptual learning channels with which the student is the most comfortable.

Scarcella (1990) portrays that visual students like to read and obtain a great deal from visual stimulation. For them, lectures, conversations, and oral directions without any visual backup can be confusing. Visual learners will be able to recall what they see and will prefer written instructions. These students are sight readers who enjoy reading silently. They will learn by observing and enjoy working with computer graphic, maps, graphs, charts, diagrams, or text with a lot of pictures (p. 320).

In contrast, auditory students are comfortable without visual input and thus enjoy and profit from unembellished lectures, conversations, and oral directions. They are excited by classroom interactions in role-plays and analogous activities. Students with this style will be able to recall what they hear and will prefer oral instructions. They can recreate what they hear by concentrating on previous lessons. These students should be introduced to new information by hearing it (Carbo, Dunn, and Dunn, 1986). They learn by listening and speaking. These students enjoy talking and interviewing. They are phonetic readers who enjoy oral reading, choral reading, and listening to recorded books. They learn best by interviewing, debating, giving oral reports, or participating in oral discussions of written material. They occasionally, however, have difficulty with written work.

Kinesthetic and tactile students like lots of movement and enjoy working with tangible objects, collages, and flashcards. Sitting at a desk for long is not for them; they prefer to have

frequent breaks and move around the room. Kinesthetic learners also learn by manipulating objects. They need to involve their whole body in learning (Scarcella, 1990, p.320).

Reid (1987) demonstrated that ESL students varied significantly in their sensory preferences, with people from certain cultures differentially favoring the three different modalities for learning. Students from Asian cultures, for instance, were often highly visual, with Koreans being the most visual. Many studies, including Reid's, found that Hispanic learners were frequently auditory. Reid discovered that Japanese are very non-auditory. ESL students from a variety of cultures were tactile and kinesthetic in their sensory preferences.

2.2.3 Personality Learning Styles

Another style aspect that is important for L2 education is that of personality type, which consists of four strands: extroverted vs. introverted; intuitive-random vs. sensing-sequential; thinking vs. feeling; and closure-oriented/judging vs. open/perceiving. Personality type (often called psychological type) is a construct based on the work of psychologist Carl Jung (Oxford, 2003, p. 4). Some contend that an individual learning type can be made out of sixteen possible combinations of these preferences (Felder, Felder, and Dietz, 2002). A preference for one or the other category of a dimension may be mild or strong. Students with different type preferences tend to respond differently to different teaching styles. Ehrman and Oxford (1990) found a number of significant relationships between personality type and L2 proficiency in native-English-speaking learners of foreign languages.

Extroverted vs. introverted

By definition, extroverts gain their greatest energy from the external world. They want interaction with people and have many friendships, some deep and some not. In contrast, introverts derive their energy from the internal world, seeking solitude and tending to have just a few friendships, which are often very deep. Extroverts and introverts can learn to work together with the help of the teacher. Enforcing time limits in the L2 classroom can keep extroverts' enthusiasm to a manageable level. Rotating the person in charge of leading L2 discussions gives introverts the opportunity to participate equally with extroverts (Oxford, 2003, p. 5).

Intuitive-random vs. sensing-sequential

Oxford (2003) also distinguishes intuitive-random and sensing-sequential styles. Intuitive-random students think in abstract, futuristic, large-scale, and non-sequential ways. They like to create theories and new possibilities, often have sudden insights, and prefer to guide their own learning. In contrast, sensing-sequential learners are grounded in the here and now. They like facts rather than theories, want guidance and specific instruction from the teacher, and look for consistency. The key to teaching both intuitive-random and sensing-sequential learners is to offer variety and choice: sometimes a highly organized structure for sensing-sequential learners and at other times multiple options and enrichment activities for intuitive-random students.

Thinking vs. feeling

Thinking learners are oriented toward the stark truth, even if it hurts some people's feelings. They want to be viewed as competent and do not tend to offer praise easily–even though they might secretly desire to be praised themselves. Sometimes they seem detached. In comparison, feeling learners value other people in very personal ways. They show empathy and compassion through words, not just behaviors, and say whatever is needed to smooth over difficult situations. Though they often wear their hearts on their sleeves, they want to be respected for

personal contributions and hard work. L2 teachers can help thinking learners show greater overt compassion to their feeling classmates and can suggest that feeling learners might tone down their emotional expression while working with thinking learners.

Closure-oriented/judging vs. open/perceiving

Closure-oriented students want to reach judgments or completion briskly and want clarity as soon as possible. These students are serious, hardworking learners who like to be given written information and enjoy specific tasks with deadlines. Sometimes their desire for closure hampers the development of fluency (Ehrman & Oxford, 1989). In contrast, open learners want to stay available for continuously new perceptions and are thus sometimes called "perceiving." They take L2 learning less seriously, treating it like a game to be enjoyed rather than a set of tasks to be completed. Open learners dislike deadlines. They want to have a good time and seem to soak up L2 information by osmosis rather than hard effort. Open learners sometimes do better than closure-oriented learners in developing fluency (Ehrman & Oxford, 1989), but they are at a disadvantage in a traditional classroom setting. Closure-oriented and open learners provide a good balance for each other in the L2 classroom. The former are the task-driven learners and the latter know how to have fun. Skilled L2 teachers sometimes consciously create cooperative groups that include both types of learners, since these learners can benefit from collaboration with each other (Oxford, 2003, p. 6).

2.2.4 Tolerance of Ambiguity Styles

Brown (2000) considers ambiguity tolerance as a style that concerns the degree to which learners are cognitively willing to tolerate ideas and propositions that run counter to their own belief system or structure of knowledge. Some learners are, for instance, relatively open-minded in accepting ideologies and facts that contradict their own views. Others, more close-minded, tend to reject items that are contradictory or slightly incongruent with their existing system.

Ambiguity-tolerant learners learn best when opportunities for experience and risk, as well as interaction, are present. Ambiguity-intolerant learners, nonetheless, learn most effectively when in less flexible, less risky, and more structured situations.

2.3 Prior Learning Style Research

A significant study on learning style preferences was conducted by Reid (1987). By using Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire (PLSPQ), she asked 1,388 students to identify their perceptual learning style preferences. The overall results of the research indicated that ESL learners strongly preferred kinesthetic and tactile learning styles when compared to audio and visual. Furthermore, most groups showed a negative preference for group learning.

Following Reid's study, Willing (1988) conducted a research with respect to the learning styles in adult migrant education. To serve the purposes of the survey, a new questionnaire was developed since the existing ones had some deficiencies such as having a too narrow focus or being complex in their format and wording. The questionnaire consisted of thirty items on the first page, the second page included fifteen learning strategies, and the third page included items regarding individual biographical results. 517 learners from over thirty ethnic groups participated the study, but only five of the ethnic groups (Vietnamese, Chinese, Arabic speakers, South Americans, and Polish/Czech speakers) were large enough for statistical analysis.

From the analysis of the results, Willing (1988) stated that it was impossible to make "statistically valid cross-comparisons relating a question to more than one biographical variable at a time" (p. 122). For this reason, the individual characteristics of the participants were considered separately. The results indicated that there were cultural differences with respect to

the learning style preferences of the learners. Though the mean of the item "I like to study grammar" was lower than expected, all learners from the distinct cultures reflected that they liked studying grammar. Nonetheless, the Arabic learners were the ones who preferred grammar the most since 65 % of them ranked this item as the "best".

The item related to the use of cassettes at home revealed that the Vietnamese were the only learners who preferred this method. The Chinese, in contrast, appeared to "have little confidence in it" (Willing, 1988, p. 130). When the same question was considered with respect to the length of residence in Australia, it was revealed that the variation was not big enough to be statistically meaningful. The results with regard to sex indicated that males tend to write everything in their notebooks more than females. In addition, though moderately both visual and kinesthetic modalities were female preferences.

Cheng and Banya (1998) conducted a research in which 140 male freshman learners at the Taiwanese military academy completed seven questionnaires including perceptual learning style preference. The questionnaire was also completed by Taiwanese teachers teaching at Taiwanese universities. The results obtained from the self-reported surveys revealed that the Taiwanese military students did not have significantly different preferences for any single learning style.

Predicated on the data obtained from the perceptual learning style self-reports, it was uncovered that the learners preferred the perceptual learning styles of auditory, tactile, and individual learning. Cheng and Banya also provide further information revealed as a result of the statistical analysis of the perceptual learning style questionnaire. Their findings include the ensuing:

- Students who preferred kinesthetic learning have more confidence as well as more positive attitudes and beliefs about foreign language learning than students with other perceptual learning style preferences.
- Students with the individual preference style use more language learning strategies, and they are less tolerant of ambiguity.
- Students who identified themselves as tactile learners seemed to be more anxious about learning English.
- Students with an auditory preference like to make friends with and speak with foreign language speakers (in this case, English speakers).
  (Cheng and Banya, 1998, p. 82)

In another study, Rausch (1996) examined 365 Japanese college students to investigate whether they are good language learners by using a survey questionnaire. He also explained learning styles based on Gregore's Gregore Style Delineator, but used simplified labels for the learning types: heart, head, hands, and free learning styles. Some of the qualities of a 'Good Language Learner', described by Stern (1975), are "opportunistic", "highly motivated", and "highly adaptable", among others. Rausch (1996) also asked students to assess their own learning styles before using Gregore's Gregore Style Delineator. In brief, most of the 365 Japanese college students did not have the habits of 'Good Language Learner', and also they did not generally understand Rausch (1996)'s explanation of learning styles, including heart, head, hands, and free learning styles. Additionally, they did not know their own learning styles since their self-assessment about learning styles before the test and the results from their learning styles survey were often different (Rausch, 1996).

Peacock (2001) experimented on 206 EFL students and 46 EFL teachers at a Hong Kong university to prove Reid's two major hypotheses that "all students have their own learning styles and learning strengths and weaknesses", and "a mismatch between teaching and learning styles causes learning failure and frustration." Peacock used interviews and Reid's perceptual learning style preference questionnaire. Perceptual learning style preference questionnaire (PLSPQ) includes thirty items to help identify students' learning preferences, using five-point scale:

strongly agree (SA), agree (A), undecided (U), disagree (D), and strongly disagree (SD). The results of the study confirm Reid's first hypothesis – all students have their own learning styles and learning strengths and weakness. Also, Reid's second hypothesis – A mismatch between teaching and learning styles causes learning failure, frustration, and demotivation – is also shown to be generally true in this study (Peacock, 2001).

In Dunn's (1993) research, they examined multicultural diversity of learning styles among "Afro-American", "Chinese American", "Mexican American", and "Greek American" students, who were all fourth through sixth graders, by using their Learning Style Inventory (LSI) and Productivity Environmental Preference Survey (PEPS). Each group was compared to the other three groups (Dunn, 1993). The groups which had the most significant differences were "Afro-American/Chinese American", which means fifteen of the twenty-two LSI variables showed significantly different results. On the other hand, Greek American and Mexican American students were different on only six of the twenty-two LSI scales. Her conclusions are that "groups do learn differently from each other" and "apparently all children can learn but they need to be taught using their individual learning style strengths if they are to master new and difficult academic materials" (Dunn, 1993, p. 15).

Hyland (1993) replicated the study done by Reid (1987) on the learning style preferences of ESL learners in the United States. Reid's questionnaire asking students to identify their perceptual learning preferences was administered in either Japanese or English to 440 students at 8 universities in Japan. His study confirmed Reid's findings that Japanese learners appear to have no strong learning style preferences, a fact which might help explain the language learning difficulties experienced by numerous Japanese students. Moreover, since the visual modality is a negative style for many Japanese, many students are unable to take full advantage of an education system which emphasizes the importance of reading texts, composition and written grammar exercises. On the other hand, students with mixed modality strengths are able to process information in a number of ways and often have a better chance of success than those with single modality strength. The research suggests that while Japanese learners have no major learning preferences, they appear to have three modalities (auditory, tactile, and kinesthetic) and individual learning as their minor styles.

Wintergerst and DeCapua (1998) attempted to identify the learning styles of ESL students through an analysis and comparison of participants' responses to three elicitation instruments: Reid's (1987) perceptual learning style preference questionnaire, a background questionnaire, and data from oral interviews. The participants of the study were undergraduate Russian speaking students enrolled in credit-bearing intermediate or advanced ESL courses. There were 32 participants at two private institutions. In a second follow-up study, the authors expanded upon the first study by examining the difficulties of conceptualizing learning style modalities and of developing assessment instruments for ESL students that actually measure what they claim to do. The authors expanded the focus of their study to include university-level ESL students representing four language groups at two institutions of higher learning in the metropolitan New York area. The sample consisted of 100 ESL students, 55 females and 45 males, enrolled in credit-bearing intermediate or advanced ESL courses. The students ranged from 17 to 49 years old, with a mean age of 21.5. The four language groups included Chinese (51), Korean (23), Spanish (11), and Russian (15). Wintergerst and DeCapua (1998) examined the validity of the hypothesized factor structure of Reid's perceptual learning style preference questionnaire through exploratory factor analysis. Exploratory factor analysis was used to explore the dimensionality of the perceptual learning style preference questionnaire. Results showed that specific survey items did not necessarily group into factors conceptually compatible with Reid's learning style model. This, however, is not to say that unconfirmed hypothesized model resulting from factor analysis invalidates the model but only different populations may produce other results.

Riazi and Riasati (2006) carried out a study in Shiraz EFL institutes. The study aimed at investigating the language learning style preferences of Iranian EFL learners, and the degree of teachers' awareness of them. To this end, 219 students (121 males and 98 females) from different levels of instruction and different ages (14-44), studying at two language institutes took part in the study. As a further step, 14 teachers working with the same students were called for cooperation. A 13-item language learning preference questionnaire adopted from Brindley (1984) was employed to elicit information for the study. Results showed the learning preferences of students in different areas. Results also indicated that teachers are aware of their students' learning preferences in some cases, but unaware in some others. Thus, they concluded that there needs to be a closer cooperation between teachers and students in some instances.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Participants

172 students, 104 females and 68 males, from ten intermediate EFL classes at the Center for Foreign Languages of the University of Social Sciences and Humanities in Ho Chi Minh City (USSH-HCMC) were invited to participate in the study. The average age was 22.18 years ranging from 16 to 42 years old. The participants varied greatly in terms of the length of their learning experience. The mean years of learning experience was 8.61 with a standard deviation 4.07 from the mean.

3.2 Instrument

The instrument used in this study was the questionnaire, "the most common method of collecting survey data" (De Vavs, 2001). The Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire commenced with a brief description of six learning style modalities developed by Reid (1987) particularly for learners of foreign languages. The questionnaire assesses preferred learning styles of students based on how students learn best using their perceptions: visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile preferences, and two social aspects of learning: group and individual preferences. Reid (1995) classified styles as *Major, Minor,* or *Negative*. *Major* is a preferred learning style, *Minor* is one in which learners can still function well, and *Negative* means they may have difficulty learning. Thirty statements of the questionnaire were divided into 6 groups, each of which represents a particular learning style. The first group – visual- consists of statements 6, 10, 12, 24, and 29. The second group – auditory – includes statements 1, 7, 9, 17, and 20. The next one – kinesthetic- covers statements 2, 8, 15, 19, and 26. Statements 11, 14, 16, 22, and 25 are about tactile learning. The group consists of items 3, 4, 5, 21, and 23. The last learning style – individual- includes items 13, 18, 27, 28, and 30. Respondents are expected to indicate how much they agree with each item on a scale from one to five. Each number notes a certain measurement such as: (5) strongly agree, (4) agree, (3) undecided, (2) disagree, and (1) strongly disagree. A high score on the scale indicated a positive opinion and vice versa, a low score on the scale indicated a negative opinion.

The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS Version 16.0 for Windows). The data which were collected through the Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire (PLSPQ) were subjected to descriptive statistics utilizing minimum, maximum, mean, standard deviation, as well as the one way ANOVA.

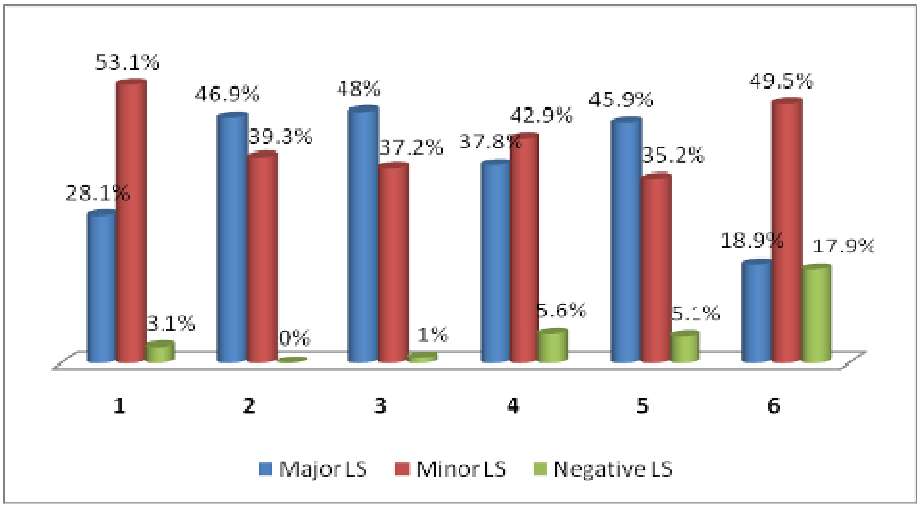
4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 The Overall Learning Style Peferences of EFL Students

Table 1. *Overall Percentages of Learning Style Preference of EFL Students*

Learning style (LS) preferences	Visual	Auditory	Kinesthetic	Tactile	Group	Individual
Major LS	28.1	46.9	48.0	37.8	45.9	18.9
Minor LS	53.1	39.3	37.2	42.9	35.2	49.5
Negative LS	3.1	0.0	1.0	5.6	5.1	17.9
Total	84.2	86.2	86.2	86.2	86.2	86.2
Missing	15.8	13.8	13.8	13.8	13.8	13.8
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Figure 1. *Distribution of Overall Learning Style Preference of EFL Students by Percentage*



(**1** = Visual; **2** = Auditory; **3** = Kinesthetic; **4** = Tactile; **5** = Group; **6** = Individual)

Generally speaking, the results of this study showed that EFL students had a strong tendency to kinesthetic learning styles. Most groups chose the minor learning style for visual (53.1%), tactile (42.9%) and individual learning (49.5%). This result is not compatible with the result of Reid's study that Asian students usually prefer individual more than group learning styles. Here, we can easily see that 45.9% of students are group-oriented. Furthermore, it is worth to mention that the EFL students considered kinesthetic (48%), auditory (46.9%); and group (45.9%) as their frequently used learning styles. Among those, kinesthetic learning got the highest scores (38.95) as the table below:

Table 2. *Overall Learning Style Preference Scores of EFL Students*

Learning styles						
	Visual	Auditory	Kinesthetic	Tactile	Group	Individual
EFL students	34.27	36.98	38.95	37.59	36.30	31.43

Notes: Major learning style preference = 38-50
Minor learning style preference = 25-37
Negligible learning style preference = < =24

Also, EFL students favored many minor styles (visual, auditory, tactile, group and individual learning styles). Similar to the findings from Reid's study, the students also appeared to have multiple major learning style preferences. These results may be due to very positive responses to questionnaires. That means the students do not answer across all available options (strongly

agree to strongly disagree). This result was quite consistent with some previous researches pertaining to learning styles. The study done by Wintergerst and DeCapua (1998) showed that Russian students favored the kinesthetic learning style closely followed by the auditory learning style. Also Reid (1987) reported that Chinese university students in the U.S preferred kinesthetic and tactile style and disfavored the group learning style. Jones (1997) stated that his Taiwanese university students favored kinesthetic and tactile styles, and disfavored individual styles. The Singapore university students in Chu and Chew's (1997) study favored kinesthetic and tactile styles, and did not disfavor any styles. Rossi-Le (1995) surveyed adult L2 immigrants in the US. They favored kinesthetic and tactile styles and did not disfavor any other styles. Hyland (1995) showed that the Japanese learners favored auditory and tactile styles, and disfavored visual and group styles. Hyland also reported that senior students favored kinesthetic styles. Goodson (1993) analyzed that the East Asian students would not choose group learning but preferred visual and kinesthetic styles of learning (as cited in Reid et al., 1998, p.17). Cheng and Banya (1998) mentioned Confucian philosophy to describe Chinese students' learning preferences. They indicated that Chinese students were likely to learn by observing a learning model with others during the learning process, but at the outcome stage, individual achievement was likely to be valued.

4.2 Learning Style Preferences and Fields of Study

Fazarro and Martin (2004) suggest learning style preferences of the students were likely to differ in each of the chosen majors. This tendency suggests similar learning styles were likely to be found among the participants who are in the same major. In this way, if learner's major was triggering the similar learning styles, it would be effective to see the relationship between a certain learning style and a major. It was assumed that the result would become a powerful indicator to understand learning styles of EFL students in an effective view. However, statistical analysis in this study did not provide as many significant differences as anticipated (Table 3).

Table 3. *One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for Learning Style Preferences according to Fields of Study*

			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
VISUAL * Major	Between Groups	(Combined)	163.732	3	54.577	1.855	.139
	Within Groups		4736.535	161	29.419		
	Total		4900.267	164			
AUDITORY * Major	Between Groups	(Combined)	251.158	3	83.719	4.461	.004
	Within Groups		3096.747	165	18.768		
	Total		3347.905	168			
KINESTHETIC * Major	Between Groups	(Combined)	348.549	3	116.183	4.065	.007
	Within Groups		4715.972	165	28.582		
	Total		5064.521	168			
TACTILE * Major	Between Groups	(Combined)	1044.776	3	348.259	.600	.616
	Within Groups		95716.052	165	580.097		
	Total		96760.828	168			
GROUP * Major	Between Groups	(Combined)	256.376	3	85.459	1.620	.187
	Within Groups		8705.233	165	52.759		
	Total		8961.609	168			
INDIVIDUAL * Major	Between Groups	(Combined)	283.777	3	94.592	1.681	.173
	Within Groups		9285.690	165	56.277		
	Total		9569.467	168			

Table 4. *Learning Style Preference Scores According to Fields of Study*

Learning style						
Major field	Visual	Auditory	Kinesthetic	Tactile	Group	Individual
English	36.60	38.05	40.50	39.45	37.60	34.80
Accounting	34.47	38.26	38.79	35.81	37.55	30.48
Computer Science	33.21	36.14	36.00	41.27	34.91	31.27
Banking & Finance	33.95	35.49	39.53	35.53	35.33	31.39

Notes: Major learning style preference = 38-50
Minor learning style preference = 25-37
Negligible learning style preference = 0-24

The responses for all four fields of study revealed that kinesthetic learning was a major preferred learning style by students in all major fields except Computer Science. F (3,165) = 4.065, p = 0.007. This result was compatible with the Reid's study. However, in contrast, visual learning was not selected as a major learning style by any students in all four major fields. The p value showed that there were no significant differences among students' majors in visual learning style. This is similar with group, and individual learning; which were considered minor learning styles by all students. Accounting majors were the least oriented toward individual learning while Computer Science majors were the least oriented toward both group and visual learning.

Surprisingly, students in two majors, English and Computer Science, preferred tactile learning as a major learning style with the very high mean scores (39.45 and 41.27). In addition, if in Reid's study, four out of six majors preferred auditory learning mode, here, this learning style was also selected by two out of four majors: English (mean = 38.05) and Accounting (mean = 38.26) with F (3,165) = 4.461, p = 0.004.

English and Accounting majors were also significantly more visual than Computer Science and Banking & Finance. As seen from the table 4.2, English majors almost got the highest mean scores for all learning styles except auditory and tactile learning.

4.3 Learning Style Preferences and Length of Tertiary Study

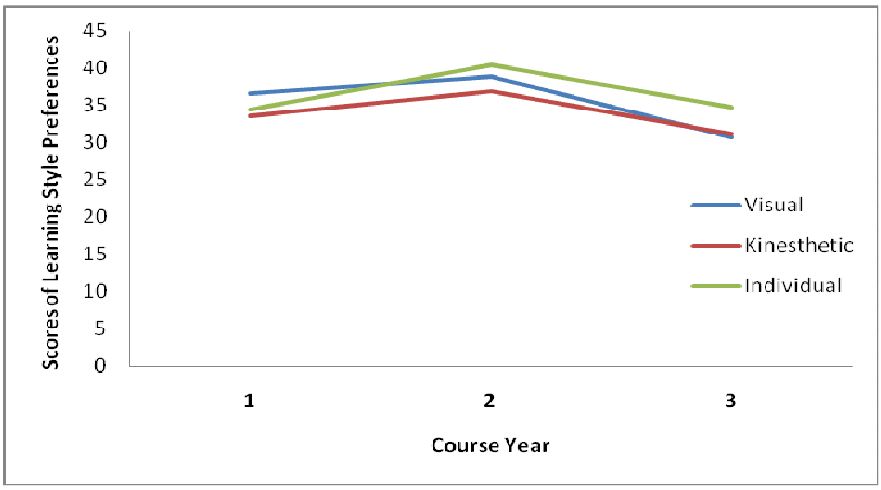
Statistical analyses of this variable generally were consistent with analyses of the first variable – fields of study.

Table 5. *Learning Style Preference Scores according to Length of Tertiary Study*

Learning style						
Course year	Visual	Auditory	Kinesthetic	Tactile	Group	Individual
The 1st year	36.60	38.33	38.82	35.78	35.59	30.73
The 2nd year	33.65	35.96	36.89	38.26	37.05	31.17
The 3rd year	34.45	38.05	40.50	39.45	37.60	34.80

Notes: Major learning style preference = 38-50
Minor learning style preference = 25-37
Negligible learning style preference = 0-24

Figure 2. *Distribution of Visual, Kinesthetic, and Individual Learning Style Preference Scores for the Length of Tertiary Study*



Interestingly, the Table 5 and Figure 2 revealed certain similarities between the first year and third year students' learning style preferences. Both groups expressed a strong preference for auditory and kinesthetic learning. The second year students, on the other hand, considered these modalities as minor ones. The third year students were significantly more kinesthetic than the first and second year students, F (1,167) = 5.023, p = 0.022 (see Table 6).

Table 6. *One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for Learning Style Preferences according to Length of Tertiary Study*

			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
VISUAL * Course	Between Groups	(Combined)	123.908	1	123.908	4.229	.039
	Within Groups		4776.359	163	29.303		
	Total		4900.267	164			
AUDITORY * Course	Between Groups	(Combined)	26.150	1	26.150	1.315	.253
	Within Groups		3321.755	167	19.891		
	Total		3347.905	168			
KINESTHETIC * Course	Between Groups	(Combined)	147.883	1	147.883	5.023	.022
	Within Groups		4916.638	167	29.441		
	Total		5064.521	168			
TACTILE * Course	Between Groups	(Combined)	78.335	1	78.335	.135	.713
	Within Groups		96682.494	167	578.937		
	Total		96760.828	168			
GROUP * Course	Between Groups	(Combined)	38.232	1	38.232	.716	.399
	Within Groups		8923.377	167	53.433		
	Total		8961.609	168			
INDIVIDUAL * Course	Between Groups	(Combined)	257.328	1	257.328	4.615	.031
	Within Groups		9312.140	167	55.761		
	Total		9569.467	168			

The choice of visual learning as a minor rather than a major preference learning by all the students appears to conflict with some previous learning style research, which reports that

"mainstream culture emphasizes visual learning through the written word" (Bennette, 1979, p. 266, cited from Reid, 1987). Of three types of students in terms of length of tertiary study, the first year students indicated a significantly greater preference for visual than two others, F (1,163) = 4.229, p = 0.039.

Besides visual learning, group and individual modalities were selected as minor learning style preferences by all three groups. The second year students were the least group-oriented, while the first year students were the least individual-oriented, F (1,167) = 4.615, p = 0.031.

As displayed in Table 5, it is obvious that the majority of students would prefer a more student centered style of learning. The longer they study in universities, the more they are likely to adopt group and individual learning styles. They not only prefer to work alone but also enjoy group-work activities to exchange ideas with one another.

4.4 Learning Style Preferences and Genders

Many studies have discovered that males and females learn differently from each other (Ebel, 1999; Cavanaugh, 2002). The previous research of learning style shows that women preferred a more light, warmer, more structured environment, and kinesthetic learning (Price, 1996). Doing the language learning tasks connected with problem-solving, male students and female ones show clear differences in their approaches to learning tasks (Dorval, 2000). When specific language tasks are considered, females do better on some of them and males do better on others. For instance, females exceed on tasks requiring perceptual speed but males do better on the general information tasks (Feingold, 1999).

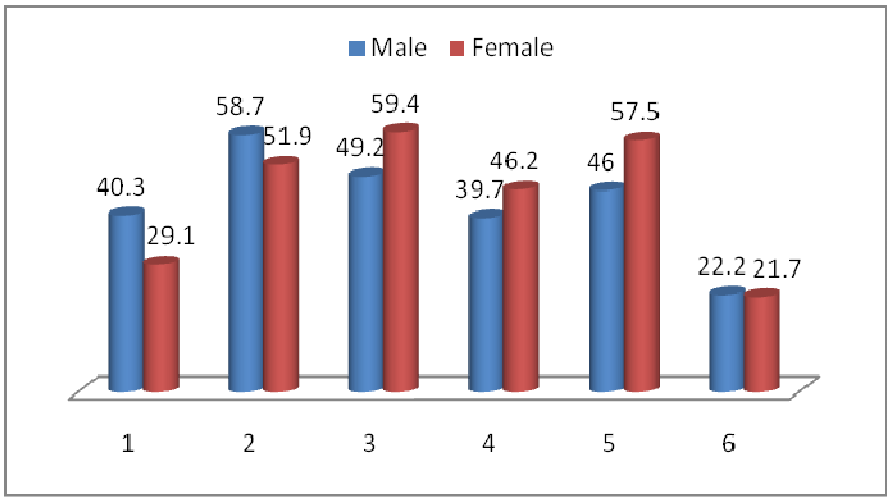
To find out if the differences between male and female students' in terms of their preferences for learning styles in this study were significant or not, one-way ANOVA test was conducted. Results are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. *One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for Learning Style Preferences according to Genders*

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
VISUAL * Gender	Between Groups	32.501	1	32.501	1.088	.298
	Within Groups	4867.766	163	29.864		
	Total	4900.267	164			
AUDITORY * Gender	Between Groups	.007	1	.007	.000	.985
	Within Groups	3347.899	167	20.047		
	Total	3347.905	168			
KINESTHETIC * Gender	Between Groups	67.499	1	67.499	2.256	.135
	Within Groups	4997.022	167	29.922		
	Total	5064.521	168			
TACTILE * Gender	Between Groups	621.584	1	621.584	1.080	.300
	Within Groups	96139.245	167	575.684		
	Total	96760.828	168			
GROUP * Gender	Between Groups	97.317	1	97.317	1.833	.178
	Within Groups	8864.292	167	53.080		
	Total	8961.609	168			
INDIVIDUAL * Gender	Between Groups	41.092	1	41.092	.721	.397
	Within Groups	9516.825	167	56.987		
	Total	9557.917	168			

As indicated in Figure 3, both male and female participants chose the visual learning style as one of their minor learning style preferences with the large percentages of 59.7% and 70.9%. This means only 40.3% of males and 29.1% of females considered this mode as a major one.

Figure 3. *Distribution of Major Learning Style Preference for Genders by Percentage*



(**1** = Visual; **2** = Auditory; **3** = Kinesthetic; **4** = Tactile; **5** = Group; **6** = Individual)

There was no meaningful significance between male and female students in the auditory learning style, p= 0.985 (Table 7).The male students' total mean was 36.97, and the female's total mean was 36.98, meaning that this style was equally preferred by both genders. Males are as auditory as females (58.7% and 51.9% respectively). Kinesthetic learning or hands on activity learning was chosen as a major learning style preference by female students (mean= 38.43), but as a minor learning style by male students (mean = 37.13). This result is contrary to the remarks of Marcus (1999), who state that males tend to be best kinesthetically and tactually; are often in need of mobility and informal seating while concentrating; and, if they have third modality strength, it tends to be visual. Males are more nonconforming and peer motivated than females. Males tend to learn less by listening. Females, more than males, tend to be auditory, authority-oriented, need significantly more quiet while concentrating whereas many males blocked out sound and were often unaware of it.

As far as visual and auditory learning styles were concerned, males were a little bit more visual and less auditory. This appears to be consistent with studies conducted by Aries (1996) and Fox (1999) which suggest that males feel more comfortable in a lecturing role, which is a demonstration of expertise and status, but females feel more comfortable in a listening role, which show a desire to collaborate, bond and to be liked by products of a world of connections, not status.

A massive number of males and females chose the individual learning style as one of their minor learning styles. A very small percentage of learners thought this styles as their major one (22.2% of males and 21.7% of females), meaning that this style was less preferred among the other learning styles. For group learning, this style was a bit more preferred by females than by males (57.5% and 46% respectively).

From the total means of individual learning and group learning, it can be concluded that students seem to favor a communicative approach to language learning. It seems they feel more comfortable, productive, and relaxed by working in pairs, or in groups where their voices would be heard, and valued. Tannen (1992) suggests that male students prefer to get learning tasks which give them the possibility to talk more in public settings (report-talks) since they feel

compelled to establish or maintain their position in the group. Female students, on the other hand, prefer to talk more in private settings (rapport-talk), since they see conversation as an important way of maintaining relationships.

Table 8. *Learning Style Preference Scores according to Gender*

Learning style						
	Visual	Auditory	Kinesthetic	Tactile	Group	Individual
Male	34.84	36.97	37.13	40.08	35.32	32.10
Female	33.92	36.98	38.43	36.11	36.89	31.08

Notes: Major learning style preference = 38-50
Minor learning style preference = 25-37
Negligible learning style preference = 0-24

The results showed that there was no statistically significant difference between the learning style preferences of the two genders because all of the significance values were far above the significance value. Even though theories claim that male and female preferred learning styles differ, the results seemed to violate the norms. This could be due to the learning environment in the respective universities that treat male and female equally. Female students are not discriminated in term of knowledge accessibility and opportunity to success. Hence, students are free to apply any style that suits them most as long as it guarantees desired learning outcome.

4.5 Learning style preferences and ages

Learning styles vary with age. Some learning styles are developmental and several people's styles alter as they grow older. These style elements are: sociological, motivation, responsibility, and internal vs. external structure. Children tend to prefer to work with peers instead of working alone and prefer an authoritative versus a collegial teacher. For numerous people, auditory and visual perceptual elements strengthen with age (Dunn & Griggs, 1998). This can be proved by the results shown in Table 9.

Table 9. *Learning Style Preference Scores according to Age*

Age	Visual	Auditory	Kinesthetic	Tactile	Group	Individual
<=20	34.60	38.34	38.95	37.04	38.35	30.24
> 20	36.65	38.95	39.34	36.2	35.81	33.51

Notes: Major learning style preference = 38-50
Minor learning style preference = 25-37
Negligible learning style preference = 0-24

The analysis of the data collected from the survey also pointed out that the older learners became the more visual than they were. The scores indicated that students over 20 were a bit more auditory and kinesthetic than the younger ones. However, while the younger students were in favor of the group, the older ones occasionally applied this style in learning English. They were also less individual and tactile than the younger ones.

Table 10. *One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for Learning Style Preferences according to Ages*

			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
VISUAL * Ages	Between Groups	(Combined)	131.341	5	26.268	.878	.497
	Within Groups		4696.782	157	29.916		
	Total		4828.123	162			
AUDITORY * Ages	Between Groups	(Combined)	119.233	5	23.847	1.239	.293
	Within Groups		3098.168	161	19.243		
	Total		3217.401	166			
KINESTHETIC * Ages	Between Groups	(Combined)	121.992	5	24.398	.819	.538
	Within Groups		4795.002	161	29.783		
	Total		4916.994	166			
TACTILE * Ages	Between Groups	(Combined)	58.639	5	11.728	.020	1.000
	Within Groups		96561.517	161	599.761		
	Total		96620.156	166			
GROUP * Ages	Between Groups	(Combined)	134.100	5	26.820	.500	.776
	Within Groups		8638.702	161	53.657		
	Total		8772.802	166			
INDIVIDUAL * Ages	Between Groups	(Combined)	348.228	5	69.646	1.222	.301
	Within Groups		9175.891	161	56.993		
	Total		9524.120	166			

Though Harmer (2002) states that at different stages of age development, people are different in characteristics, traits and ways in language learning, the results of one-way ANOVA analysis showed no significant differences between these two variables as displayed in Table 10. Both groups appeared to have more characteristics of adult learners rather than those of adolescents. According to Knowles (1970, 1976, 1980), adult learners are self-directed and independent, and they are able to draw on a reservoir of accumulated experience as a rich resource in learning, are aware of their learning needs and want to apply skills and knowledge to real-life problems and tasks. Their previous learning experience does have impact on their learning styles. Students usually make contrasts and comparisons between their former English teachers' teaching practice and the new one's. Even if the new one's teaching is more reasonable and appealing, their former teacher's teaching impact still lasts. University students in Vietnam, in general, have no or little real-life experiences; therefore, they do not have a clear picture of their needs required by their future career. English teachers are expected to inform their students of what to learn and the language requirements by the society.

4.6 Learning Style Preferences and Learning Language Experience

In relation to Kolb's (1981) experiential learning theory, Fazzaro and Martin (2004) pointed out that most of us developing learning styles as a result of our hereditary past life experiences and the needs of our present environment. The result of our particular past life experiences, and the demands of our present environment emphasized some learning abilities over others. EFL students' previous language experience would impinge on their learning style preferences. It should be indicated to provide more solid information about EFL students. There is one major assumption about the differences in terms of the length of learning experiences. It is that the more the learner has experiences in EFL education, the more students would be able to use various strategies that match their own learning styles.

The analysis of the data collected can clarify if there exists a relationship between the length of language experience and learning style preference. The mean scores from the table 11 showed an interesting trend in choosing EFL students' preferred learning styles. Students who had studied English less than 2 years were higher in their preference means than all other student respondents for all learning modalities except individual. In addition, both students with the shortest and the longest length of time studying English selected kinesthetic as their major learning style have a bit the same mean scores (40.00 and 40.75). However, students who had studied English over 12 years (beginning learning English before primary school) were more individual in their learning style preference than students who had studied English for shorter periods of time with the mean score of 32.5. Together with kinesthetic learning, auditory and group modalities were chosen as the major preferred learning styles by students who started learning English before primary school or having over 12 years of studying English.

Table 11. *Learning Style Preference Scores according to Learning Language Experience*

English Experience	Visual	Auditory	Kinesthetic	Tactile	Group	Individual
Less than 2 years	38.00	38.00	40.00	43.33	40.00	30.67
2-5 years	36.50	36.50	33.50	36.50	37.50	32.00
6-8 years	34.23	37.12	38.01	35.42	35.86	31.62
9-11 years	33.91	36.71	37.58	41.96	36.46	30.83
Over 12 years	34.25	36.50	40.75	38.50	39.25	32.50

Notes: Major learning style preference = 38-50
Minor learning style preference = 25-37
Negligible learning style preference = 0-24

Table 12. *One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for Learning Style Preferences according to Learning Language Experience*

			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
VISUAL * E.Experience	Between Groups	(Combined)	67.653	4	16.913	.560	.692
	Within Groups		4832.614	160	30.204		
	Total		4900.267	164			
AUDITORY * E.Experience	Between Groups	(Combined)	11.583	4	2.896	.142	.966
	Within Groups		3336.322	164	20.343		
	Total		3347.905	168			
KINESTHETIC * E.Experience	Between Groups	(Combined)	161.363	4	40.341	1.349	.254
	Within Groups		4903.157	164	29.897		
	Total		5064.521	168			
TACTILE * E.Experience	Between Groups	(Combined)	1523.349	4	380.837	.656	.624
	Within Groups		95237.480	164	580.716		
	Total		96760.828	168			
GROUP * E.Experience	Between Groups	(Combined)	138.315	4	34.579	.643	.633
	Within Groups		8823.294	164	53.801		
	Total		8961.609	168			
INDIVIDUAL * E.Experience	Between Groups	(Combined)	33.228	4	8.307	.143	.966
	Within Groups		9536.239	164	58.148		
	Total		9569.467	168			

The ANOVA findings in Table 12 show p value is above 0.05 for all the modalities of learning styles, thus there was no significant difference for students with different language experience regarding the learning style preference.

4.7 Learning Style Preferences and English Proficiency Levels

There will be significant differences in the learning styles of students according to their academic levels (Given, Knight, Patrick, & McGuire, 1999-2000; Giordano & Rochford, 2005; Jenkins, 1991; Reese, 2005).

Table 13. *Learning Style Preference Scores according to English Proficiency Level*

English level	Visual	Auditory	Kinesthetic	Tactile	Group	Individual
Beginner	37.43	38.86	38.86	37.14	39.14	26.00
Pre-intermediate	34.44	36.67	37.43	35.41	36.79	30.03
Intermediate	34.18	37.57	38.67	36.81	35.43	32.99
Advanced	33.89	35.96	39.23	44.12	35.96	34.69

Notes: Major learning style preference = 38-50
Minor learning style preference = 25-37
Negligible learning style preference = 0-24

As can be seen from Table 13, students at beginning level showed many major learning style preferences. The mean score of group is the highest (39.14), denoting that group seems stronger among beginners than other modalities. On the other hand, pre-intermediate students had a variety of minor learning style preferences and no major ones. Individual learning got the lowest mean score (30.03) while kinesthetic got the highest one (37.43). These students also showed a tendency to visual, auditory, tactile, and group modalities. This result indicated that pre-intermediate students employed multiple-modes. Intermediate students were the least group-oriented with the mean score of 35.43. This explained the fact that intermediate students did not like learning in groups while beginners preferred this learning style the best. They liked participating in class activities. Instead of searching material by themselves, these students loved sharing and discussing information with their classmates.

Among 172 students participated in the survey, only three students get Advanced level. All of them showed an interesting result in choosing their preferred learning styles. Their mean scores on visual mode (33.89) were the lowest compared to three other levels. While pre-intermediate students showed no major learning styles, advanced students strongly preferred multimodal learning. Especially, of four groups of levels, advanced students appears to give individual learning style the highest score. This means that they appreciate self-study. They enjoy exploring information by themselves. They learn best when they work alone as well as they understand new material best when they study it alone. They make better progress in learning when they work alone. In addition, similar to beginners and intermediate, advanced learners chose kinesthetic as their major learning styles. However, surprisingly, students with the highest level strongly preferred to learn tactilely while students of the three other levels did not, implying that advanced students learn best by experience and by being involved physically in classroom. A combination of stimuli, for instance, an audio tape combined with an activity helps them understand new material. They prefer handling materials or taking notes. Writing notes or instruction can help them to remember information easily and physical involvement in the class plays major role in their retention of the information.

Table 14. *One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for Learning Style Preferences according to English Levels*

			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
VISUAL * English levels	Between Groups	(Combined)	161.211	6	26.869	.916	.485
	Within Groups		4370.763	149	29.334		
	Total		4531.974	155			
AUDITORY * English levels	Between Groups	(Combined)	123.864	6	20.644	1.058	.390
	Within Groups		2965.910	152	19.513		
	Total		3089.774	158			
KINESTHETIC * English levels	Between Groups	(Combined)	177.153	6	29.525	.964	.451
	Within Groups		4653.074	152	30.612		
	Total		4830.226	158			
TACTILE * English levels	Between Groups	(Combined)	3621.757	6	603.626	.988	.436
	Within Groups		92881.299	152	611.061		
	Total		96503.057	158			
GROUP * English levels	Between Groups	(Combined)	162.102	6	27.017	.494	.812
	Within Groups		8316.628	152	54.715		
	Total		8478.730	158			
INDIVIDUAL * English levels	Between Groups	(Combined)	651.860	6	108.643	1.942	.006
	Within Groups		8505.624	152	55.958		
	Total		9157.484	158			

The ANOVA results in Table 14 indicated that statistically significant relationships were found to exist between English proficiency level and individual learning style preference, $F(6,152) = 1.942$, $p = .006$. However, there were no significant relationships existed between proficiency level and other modalities.

5. Concluding Remarks

The results of the analyses and discussions indicated that there existed some significant relationships between students' learning style preferences and such variables as fields of study, length of tertiary study, gender, age, learning language experience, and English proficiency level.

Although it is said that traditionally, the teaching of EFL in Vietnam is dominated by a teacher-centered, book-centered, grammar-translation method and an emphasis on mechanical memory which resulted in a number of typical learning styles, with visual learning being one of them, this study proved that the visual and the individual were only preferred by a tiny number of EFL students. This suggests that EFL students showed a strong preference for more communicative activities that enabled them to be involved in physical movement. It seems students are more and more adapting themselves to active learning and express a negative attitude towards passive learning or rote learning. It is suggested that teachers should combine multiple learning styles together to make lessons more vivid and interesting. For instance, before asking students to discuss in groups, teachers can let them study alone to figure out the answers; or before organizing some games or auditory activities, teachers can give visual instructions or visual aids. To help learners learn better when being assigned activities that do not match their learner type, the teacher needs to make clear the objective of each learning task, especially those with which learners of some learner types are unfamiliar. Detailed instructions as regards how the task should be performed should also be given so as to "reduce learner misunderstanding, dissatisfaction and opposition" (Peacock 1998, p. 245).

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