

A Qualitative Case Study into Exploring the Learning Styles and Learning Strategies of Non English Major Vietnamese College Students

Truong Thi Nhu Ngoc¹, Arshad Abd Samad^{2,*}

¹Faculty of Foreign Language, Van Lang University, Vietnam

²Department of Language and Humanities Education, Faculty of Educational Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Malaysia

Received October 27, 2019; Revised December 2, 2019; Accepted December 24, 2019

Copyright©2020 by authors, all rights reserved. Authors agree that this article remains permanently open access under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0 International License

Abstract Learning styles and learning strategies have long been studied because they can influence learners' success and promote learners' autonomy, particularly in language learning. However, most studies in this area are carried out in international contexts rather than locally. Thus, many false assumptions have been made about Asian learning styles in general and Vietnamese learners in particular, i.e. they are passive and group-oriented learners, and they tend to learn by rote and memorising knowledge. The case study represents an attempt to find out if first-year non-English majored collegiate learners in Vietnam are passive or active. The significant findings from semi-structured interviews with two first-year non-English-majored Vietnamese college students indicate that Vietnamese college students are not passive and rote learners and the reasons for their reticence in class relate to their learning styles and the nature of the questions asked by their teacher. Furthermore, whether Vietnamese college students are group-oriented or not is not clearly proven from the finding. It may also depend on the students' personality and how they view learning in a group. For that reason, further research is necessary. As regards learning strategies, it is not always the rote learning approach that the students employ. They only resort to it for fear of having lower marks in the exam. They learn with understanding and use other strategies to help them memorise the knowledge.

Keywords Passive Learners, Active Learners, Style, Strategies

number of methodologies springing up and claiming to be effective practices to boost students' second language learning capabilities. These methods and approaches are mostly determined by educators and teachers, which can lead to the fact that what students acquire is a far cry from what they are taught. For that reason, a more learner-centred approach will likely bring in expected results. However, how can teachers understand their students well enough in addition to knowing their needs? To deploy suitable classroom activities effectively, it is vital to examine students' learning styles and strategies. Unfortunately, sometimes, teachers can have misconceptions or overgeneralizations about their students' styles and strategies due to being susceptible to what they read and misjudging what they see. In other words, a conscientious teacher should be not only sensitive to dissimilarities among their students but also able to avoid stereotyping them. It is evident that the majority of second language learning research about Asian learners is carried out in the English-speaking countries and thus an inaccurate picture of Asian learners in general and Vietnamese learners, in particular, can be generated (Hong-Nam & Leavell, 2006; Park, 1997, 2002; Young, 2018).

In Vietnam, most students start to learn English at lower secondary schools, and English has become an obligatory subject throughout a learner's educational journey. When students enroll in university, they also continue to make great efforts to achieve a satisfactory English level required of them to graduate. They can choose to sit for TOEIC, TOEFL or IELTS to obtain an English certificate, which can prove whether they have attained the expected English proficiency level. In recent years, the Vietnamese government has encouraged tertiary institutions to teach major subjects in English in advanced programs. Van Van (2010) mentioned that one of the most challenging issues in

1. Introduction

The past fifty years have witnessed a considerable

CITE THIS PAPER

[1] Truong Thi Nhu Ngoc, Arshad Abd Samad, "A Qualitative Case Study into Exploring the Learning Styles and Learning Strategies of Non English Major Vietnamese College Students," *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, Vol. 8, No. 1A, pp. 76 - 86, 2020. DOI: 10.13189/ujer.2020.081311.