

Learning Style Preferences and their Relationship to Linguistic Competence

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Abstract

The immediate objective of this paper is to determine the relationship between learning styles, demographic profile of the respondents and their linguistic competence. Primarily, this research endeavor desires to find out how learning styles sway students' learning absorption specifically of the English Subject. The learning theories and models that underpinned the study were the constructivists' and cognitivists' theory of learning. The Dunn and Dunn learning style model which has five key elements, namely, environmental emotional; physiological; psychological and sociological was used. Communicative Competence model created by Celce-Murcia, Dornyei and Thurrel (1995) focusing on Syntax, Morphology and Orthography also supported the study. To gather the data needed, the researchers made a personally-drafted learning styles inventory and applied the descriptive correlational method to analyze the results.

An analysis of this study yields that the over-all pre-dominant learning style preference of the respondents is Sociological preference. The Demographic profile of the student respondents as to age, birth-order, monthly-income, gender, ethno linguistic origin, and parents' educational attainment also showed significant relationship to the elements of learning style preferences. Lastly, it was found that Syntax has no significant relationship towards Environmental, Emotional, Sociological and Physiological Preference but has a huge correlation to Psychological Preference. Morphology, however, has no significant relationship to all the learning style elements. As with Syntax, Orthography showed no significant to all the learning style elements but Psychological Preference.

Keywords: Learning Styles, Preferences, Linguistic Competence, Relationship

Introduction

Basically, the teaching-learning process takes two to become successful – the teacher and the learner. However, it is universally acknowledged that it is the teacher who works out most of the crucial part of the process to attain desired outcomes – one is the full development of the child. Philosophically speaking, teachers are the captains of the ship and the crews are the students. As captains, teachers then, as they should be, must lead learning and must come up with strategies to control his crews towards common goal. As the crews, students only follow and absorb every word the teacher says for they view the teacher as the sole authority to drive knowledge. Further, successful voyage in the sea despite of constant struggle is credited to the captain. The same is true in the field of education; successful teaching evidenced by the improvement of the personality of the child would not be attained without the teacher.

However, the success of the teaching-learning process must not be entirely dependent on the teacher alone. No matter how excellent the teacher is on her teaching strategies and performance there would always be certain intervening factors that affect the learning development of the child. One of which, and is probably the most prevalent problem teachers encounter is the varied learning styles of the students. Generally, learning style is defined as the way a student uses all necessities in order to absorb difficult brain information that the brain processes. It comprises the method a student may have to capture learning, to adapt to new situations, and to apply that learning independently on practical situations that require thinking and absorption.

The study aimed to determine the learning style preferences and linguistic competence of the Grade 9 students of Mandaluyong High School in English. Specifically, it sought to answer for the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the respondents in terms of:
 - 1.1 Age;
 - 1.2 Gender;
 - 1.3 Birth Order;
 - 1.4 Parents' Monthly Income;
 - 1.5 Parents' Educational Attainment and
 - 1.6 Ethnolinguistic Origin?
2. What are the predominant learning style preferences of the student-respondents in the different elements and their sub-elements as to:
 - 2.1 Environmental Preference;
 - 2.2 Attitudes or Emotional Preference;
 - 2.3 Sociological Preference;
 - 2.4 Physiological Preference and
 - 2.5 Psychological Preference?
3. What is the competency level of the student-respondents as to the following components of linguistic competence:
 - 3.1 Syntax;
 - 3.2 Morphology and
 - 3.5 Orthography?
4. Is there a significant relationship between the demographic profile of the student-respondents and the different elements of the following learning style preferences:
 - 4.1 Environmental;
 - 4.2 Attitudes or Emotions;
 - 4.4 Sociological;
 - 4.4 Physiological and
 - 4.5 Psychological?
5. Is there a significant relationship between the student-respondents' level of linguistic competency in English as to the above-mentioned components and the following learning style preferences:
 - 5.1 Environmental;
 - 5.2 Attitudes or Emotions;
 - 5.3 Sociological;
 - 5.4 Physiological and
 - 5.5 Psychological?

This research endeavor has its roots from the researchers' inquisitiveness on the relationship of students' learning style preferences and linguistic competence in English. The researchers agree that learning style preferences indeed have a powerful relevance to the learning development of a student particularly in English considering its definition and the previous studies about it.

The learning paradigm which underpins the present investigation is based on the cognitivists' and constructivists' view of learning. From the cognitive perspective, Thompson et.al (1996) states that "cognitive theory" concentrates on the conceptualism of students' learning process. It focuses on the exploration of the way information is received, organized, retained and used by the brain". On the other hand, constructivism is "a theory of learning that allows students to develop and

construct their own understanding of the material based upon their own knowledge, beliefs and experiences in concert with new knowledge presented in the classroom.” Therefore, students’ knowledge about their learning styles is imperative as it would help them understand their strengths and weaknesses and try to alter and stretch their less preferred modes of learning.

Furthermore, the learning style model used in this study is the Dunn and Dunn learning style model created by Rita and Kenneth Dunn (1990). It is one of the most widely used approaches to learning styles.

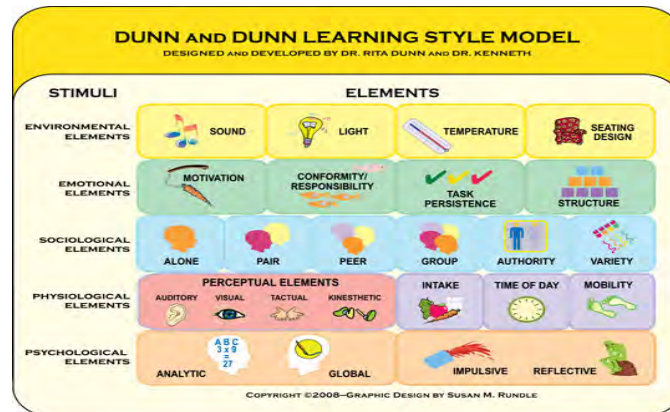


Figure 1. Dunn and Dunn Learning Style Model

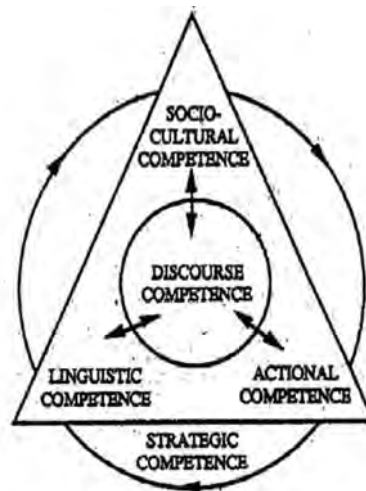


Figure 2. Proposed Communicative competence Model of Murcia, Dornyei & Thurrel

Another important model the researchers used in this study to serve as dependent variables is the communicative competence model by Celce-Murcia, Dornyei and Thurrel (1995). The proposed model was based from and compared to the well-known model of Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983) and Bachman and Palmer (1990).

However, several distinctions were made by Murcia and her research fellows as shown below in Figure 3.

The three models have obvious variations particularly on the terms and definitions used for each competence. For instance, as a focus of this study, Canale and Swain used the term grammatical competence while Murcia, Dornyei and Thurrel chose the term Linguistic competence to include lexis and phonology in addition to morphology and syntax. Linguistic competence comprises the

basic elements of communication: the sentence patterns and types, the constituent structure, the morphological inflections, and the lexical resources, as well as the phonological and orthographic systems needed to realize communication as speech or writing (Murcia et. al, 1995).

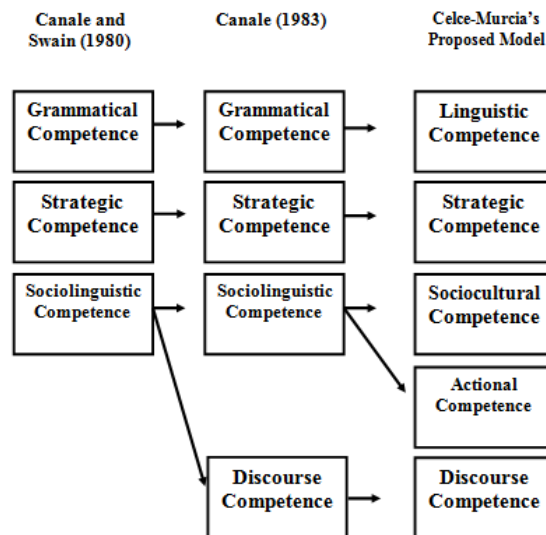


Figure 3. Distinctions between Canale and Swain (1980), Canale (1983) and Celce Murcia et. al (1995)

Moreover, the model of Murcia and her co-researchers has a more detailed explanation of the components and subcomponents to be included in a certain competence not only in the linguistic competence area but also in other competences as well.

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- SYNTAX**
- Constituent/phrase structure
 - Word order (canonical and marked)
 - Sentence types
 - statements, negatives, questions, imperatives, exclamations
 - Special constructions
 - existentials (*there + BE...*)
 - clefts (*It's X that/who...; What + sub. + verb + BE*)
 - question tags, etc.
 - Modifiers/intensifiers
 - quantifiers, comparing and equating
 - Coordination (and, or, etc.) and correlation (*both X and Y; either X or Y*)
 - Subordination (e.g., adverbial clauses, conditionals)
 - Embedding
 - noun clauses, relative clauses (e.g., restrictive and non-restrictive)
 - reported speech
- MORPHOLOGY**
- Parts of speech
 - Inflections (e.g., agreement and concord)
 - Derivational processes (productive ones)
 - compounding, affixation, conversion/incorporation
- LEXICON (receptive and productive)**
- Words
 - content words (Ns, Vs, ADJs)
 - function words (pronouns, prepositions, verbal auxiliaries, etc.)
 - Routines
 - word-like fixed phrases (e.g., *of course, all of a sudden*)
 - formulaic and semi-formulaic chunks (e.g., *how do you do?*)
 - Collocations
 - V-Obj (e.g., *spend money*), Adv-Adj (e.g., *mutually intelligible*), Adj-N (e.g., *tall building*)
 - Idioms (e.g., *kick the bucket*)
- PHONOLOGY (for pronunciation)**
- Segmentals
 - vowels, consonants, syllable types, sandhi variation (changes and reductions between adjacent sounds in the stream of speech)
 - Suprasegmentals
 - prominence, stress, intonation, rhythm
- ORTHOGRAPHY (for spelling)**
- Letters (if writing system is alphabetic)
 - Phoneme-grapheme correspondences
 - Rules of spelling
 - Conventions for mechanics and punctuation
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Figure 4. Suggested components of linguistic competence according to Murcia, Dornyei & Thurrel

The figure above shows the components as suggested by Murcia, Dornyei and Thurrel, linguistic competence.

Moreover, the researchers have formulated their own understanding of what this research is all about by formulating their own concept based on the cited theories.

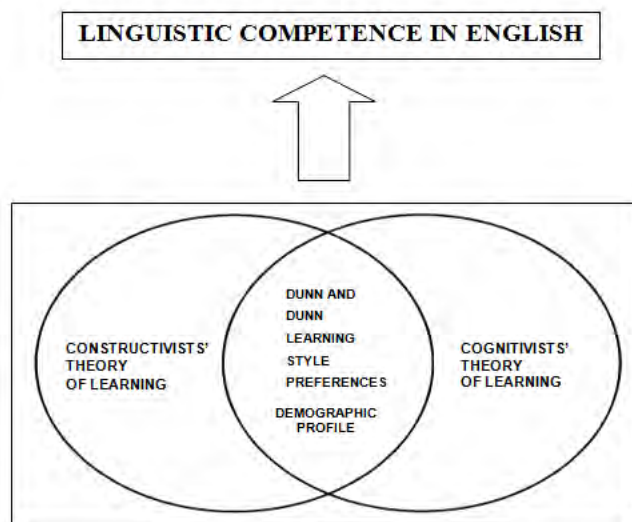


Figure 5. Relationship between Learning Style Preferences to Linguistic Competence

The Venn diagram shows the correlation of the theories and models used in this study. As the foundation and support, the learning paradigms constructivists' theory of learning and cognitivists' theory of learning are placed on both sides of the Dunn and Dunn Model. The Dunn and Dunn learning style preferences model consists of five important elements namely: 1) Environmental; 2) Emotional; 3) Sociological; 4) Physiological; 5) Psychological and these elements are placed on the middle of the learning theories. Moreover, the linguistic competence is placed on top to serve as the dependent variable of the study. The big arrow indicates the big relationship between the said theories and models to the linguistic competency of language learners.

Methodology

The respondents of this study are Grade 9 students of Mandaluyong High School, who are the pioneer batch of the K-12 Educational System. The said school is the premier municipal school in Mandaluyong City, mentoring different schools within the area. They are known to be active participants and constant achievers on the contests they join outside the campus. Moreover, the study used the descriptive-correlational method, which involves the description, recording, analysis and interpretation of the prevailing conditions and the present nature of a certain situation. This method also used to determine the preferred learning styles of the students, their level of linguistic competence and the relationship that exists among them.

The proponents used quota random sampling technique to get a sample from the total population of the Grade 9 students in Mandaluyong High School. The said school comprises of 673 students from Grade 9; the proponents then used 40% of the population to use as the sample size. The proponents first listed the 17 sections and picked all the odd-numbered sections to get the pilot and last section for the proponents believed that the two sections are quite important in the study. All in all, the total number of respondents used in the study is two hundred and sixty nine (269) students

coming from the 13 sections chosen. To gather the needed data for this study, the proponents made personally drafted questionnaires to obtain the demographic profile, predominant learning style preferences and the level of linguistic competence of the student-respondents.

The researchers made a Learning Styles Inventory based on the Dunn and Dunn learning style model consists of twenty five (25) statements as preference indicators based on

each of the Learning Style elements and their corresponding sub elements. Additionally, the researchers also developed their own questionnaire for the linguistic competence based on Murcia, Dornyei & Thurrel's model of Communicative Competence. The questionnaire centers on the three components and subcomponents of linguistic competence namely; (a) Syntax which includes word order (canonical and marked); sentence types (statements, negatives, questions, imperatives, exclamations); special constructions (question tags); coordination (and, or, etc.) and correlation (both X and Y; either X or Y); and subordination (b) Morphology which consists of parts of speech; inflections (e.g., agreement and concord); Derivational processes (productive ones) and compounding, affixation, conversion/incorporation; and lastly, (c) Orthography (for spelling) including letters (if writing system is alphabetic), Phoneme-grapheme correspondences, Rules of spelling and Conventions for mechanics and punctuation.

On March 4, the researchers first sought the permission of the authorities of Mandaluyong High School before administering the survey-questionnaires. Upon approval of the request, the researchers then conducted the survey on March 6, 2015. Fortunately, there were no problems encountered by the researchers. The facilitators or the researchers gave the questionnaires to be answered by the respondents for them to obtain the demographic profile, learning style preferences and level of linguistic competence of the respondents. The researchers then tabulated, encoded and interpreted the data.

Results

Demographic Profile of the Student-Respondents

The majority of the respondents are between the ages 15 to 16 (65.8%). There are more female (58%) than male (42%). Most of them were middle born (52%). Majority has a monthly family income of Php 4,000-Php-10,000. Their parents' greatest educational attainment is both High School Graduate, with 52.4 percent for their father and 53.9 percent for their mother. Moreover, for their ethnolinguistic origin, majority of respondents (85.8 %) were born in the Luzon Region.

Pre-dominant Learning Style Preferences of the Student-Respondents

The over-all predominant learning style preference of the Grade 9 students of Mandaluyong High School is **sociological preference** with a mean average score of 3.5242 which is "Most Preferred".

Their predominant learning style preferences as to the different sub elements were also determined:

a. In Environmental Preference, the respondents prefer "**light**" the most, among others sub-elements with a mean average score of 3.7398 (Most Preferred). This means that students are most conscious about lighting when studying. They prefer well-lit or brightly colored learning environment,

b. In Emotional Preference, they prefer "**responsibility**" the most with a mean average score of 3.689 (Most Preferred). This means that the students give the most importance in accomplishing the tasks needed to be done.

c. In Sociological Preference, they prefer “**authority**” the most, with a mean average score of 3.7026 (Most Preferred). This means that students prefer to learn with adult guidance or with authoritative companion.

d. In Psychological preference, they prefer “**intake**” the most, with a mean average score of 3.7881 (Most Preferred). This means that students mostly prefer to have something to eat while studying.

In Psychological Preference, they prefer “**global**” with a mean average score of 3.4238 (Preferred). This means that students mostly prefer to approach problems globally by looking into general concepts and address problems using those.

Linguistic Competence of the Student-Respondents

The average mean score of the level of linguistic competence were determined: Syntax 72.45354, Morphology 61.9703, and Ortography 60.0372.

Therefore, the level of linguistic competence of the student-respondents was at the **Beginning Level** according to the DepEd K-12 Curriculum ratings.

Significant Relationship of the Student-Respondents’ Demographic Profile to their Learning Style Preferences

Demographic Profile vs. Environmental Preference

Educational Attainment of their father has a significant relationship to temperature but has no relationship towards the other elements. On the other hand, the educational attainment of their mother has a significant relationship towards light and seating but has no significant relationship toward sound and temperature.

Demographic Profile vs. Emotional Preference

Educational Attainment of their father and mother has a significant relationship to motivation and none to other elements.

Demographic Profile vs. Sociological Preference

Educational Attainment of their father has a significant relationship to pair but no significant relationship to other elements.

Demographic Profile vs. Physiological Preferences

Birth Order has a significant relationship to mobility, time of day, and kinesthetic but has no significant relationship to intake, visual, auditory, and factual.

Educational Attainment of their father has a significant relationship with kinesthetic but has no significant relationship with other elements. On the other hand, educational attainment of their mother has a significant relationship with intake but has no significant relationship with other elements.

Demographic Profile vs. Psychological Preference

Gender has a significant relationship with reflective but has no significant relationship to the other elements.

Birth order has a significant relationship with analytic but has no significant relationship to the other elements.

Monthly Income has a significant relationship to reflective, but has no significant relationship to other elements.

Relationship of the Student-Respondents’ Learning Style Preferences to their Level of Linguistic Competence

Syntax has no significant relationship with Environmental, Emotional, Sociological, and Physiological Preference but has a correlation with Psychological Preference.

Morphology has no significant relationship to all the learning style elements.

Orthography, same with syntax, has no significant relationship to all the learning style elements except for Psychological Preference.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The researchers have arrived at the following conclusions based on the data obtained:

1. Majority of the student-respondents are 15 to 16 years old, and there are more females than males. Most of the respondents were middle child and has Php 4,000- Php 10,000 monthly income. Their parents' highest educational attainment was both high school graduate. Majority of the respondents are from Luzon region for their ethnolinguistic origin.

2. The over-all predominant learning style preference of the respondents is Sociological preference. Their predominant preference in the sub elements are light for Environmental; responsibility for Emotional; authority for Sociological; intake for Physiological; and Global for Psychological.

3. The level of linguistic competence of the Grade 9 students in Mandaluyong High School in each component was all at Beginning Level.

4. Age, Gender, Birth-order and Ethno linguistic origin have no significant relationship to any of the elements of the environmental preference while Educational attainment of father has a significant relationship to the element temperature. Also, educational attainment of mother shows significant relationship to the element seating and light.

Age, Gender, Birth order, Monthly Income and Ethnolinguistic origin have no significant relationship to any of the elements of Emotional Preference, while both the educational attainment of mother and father has a significant relationship to the element motivation.

Age, Gender, and Monthly income have no significant relationship with any of the elements of sociological preference while Birth order shows significant relationship to the element pair. Educational attainment of the father shows significant relationship with the element 'pair' as well as ethnolinguistic origin which is also significantly related to pair. However, educational attainment of mother has no significant relationship with any of the elements of sociological preference.

Age, Gender, Monthly Income and ethnolinguistic origin have no significant relationship to any of the elements of physiological preference while Birth order has a significant relationship with the elements mobility, time of the day and kinesthetic. Moreover, Educational attainment of father also showed significant relationship to kinesthetic while the educational attainment of mother is linked to the element intake.

Age, Educational attainment of father, and educational attainment of mother have no significant relationship to any of the elements of psychological preference. While, Birth Order has a significant relationship to the element analytic. Monthly income and Gender also showed significant relationship to the element reflective.

5. Syntax has no significant relationship towards Environmental, Emotional, Sociological and Physiological Preference but has a correlation with Psychological Preference. Morphology has no significant relationship with all the learning style elements. While in Orthography, same with Syntax has no significant to all the learning style elements except for Psychological Preference.

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