

EFL TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF ACCOMMODATING STUDENTS' LEARNING STYLES

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Abstract: This study aimed to investigate EFL teachers' perceptions of the importance of accommodating students' learning styles in a center for foreign languages in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam. Data were collected through a questionnaire. In terms of participants, 50 teachers responded to the questionnaire. Those teachers ranged from 24 to 55 years old. All of them graduated with a university bachelor's or a master's degree in English teaching. They have been teaching English at Can Tho University Center for Foreign Languages. The results indicated that teachers expressed positive perceptions of the importance of accommodating students' learning styles. It was also noted that accommodating students' learning styles enhanced interactions, retained knowledge, and improved academic performance among students. The research findings have contributed to implementing multiple teaching techniques and made recommendations and implications for future research in the field.

Keywords: Learning Styles, accommodating, EFL learners

1. Introduction

A large number of Non-English majored students in the Mekong Delta are taking general English courses for the national exam, level A, B, or C in centers for foreign languages. In Can Tho University Foreign language center, classes take place in the evening. They are handled mostly by part-time teachers who work in universities or high schools. From my observation, each EFL teacher prefers to use one or a few teaching techniques regularly in class. For example, many middle-aged teachers and above tend to give lectures by speech or writing on the board. However, some younger teachers act differently. They prefer using videos, and games accompanied by technology in teaching.

Although all students have taken placement tests before enrolling in an English course with a similar English level, they are still different in their learning styles. Some students prefer to learn by reading, others opt for listening or doing something. This may result from different backgrounds, ages, genders, and learning styles. In any class, one student may feel bored and distracted with this teacher but can get excited with another teacher. As a result, learners who are suitable with the teacher's teaching techniques will be interested in learning and score higher after the course whereas those with incompatible learning styles may score lower and even fail the final exam. The discrepancy is actually occurring in many English classes.

Another problem that can be found in English classes is the lack of students' interactions and involvement. The fact that students' speaking time or role-play performance is limited is true. The reasons may come from the inappropriateness of the tasks or activities to students' interests and learning styles.

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This study was based on the learning style theory proposed by Reid in 1987. This theory emphasized the role of teachers in accommodating students' learning styles. Reid (1987) claimed that it is possible to identify students' preferences for learning and modify instructional techniques to match students' preferences.

Although some research related to this field has been conducted, the focal point was merely on students' learning styles, or mostly in the ESL context. Therefore, this research was conducted to investigate EFL teachers' perceptions of the importance of accommodating students' learning styles. It attempted to find out the answers to the two following questions:

1. What are teachers' perceptions of the importance of accommodating students' learning styles?
2. What is teachers' understanding of characteristics of students' learning styles?

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Learning style

2.1.1. Definition

Learning style has been defined in many different ways. According to Claxton and Ralston (1978) learning style referred to a student's consistent way of responding to and using stimuli in the context of learning. Keefe (1979) considered learning styles as cognitive and affective traits that are relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive, interact with, and respond to the learning environment. Reid referred to learning styles as variations among learners in using one or more senses to understand, organize, and retain experience (1987). She categorized learning styles into six types namely visual, auditory, kinesthetic, tactile, group, and individual (p.2). Grasha (1996) stated that learning style depicted students' personal ability to acquire information together with the learning experiences. Rossi-Le (1995) claimed that the learning style is the preferred mode for perceiving, organizing, and retaining information. Another definition of learning style is made by Dunn, Dunn, and Perrin as "the way each person begins to concentrate on, process, internalize and retain new and difficult academic information" (1993). He noted that learning styles differ with age, achievement level, gender, culture, and global versus analytical brain processing. Researchers have attempted to develop a framework that can usefully describe learners' style preferences. According to Cohen and Weaver (2006, cited in Schmitt, 2010), three categories of learning style preferences are sensory/perceptual (visual, auditory, kinesthetic), cognitive (global or particular, synthesizer or analytic, deductive or inductive), and personality-related preferences (extroverted or introverted, abstract and intuitive or concrete and sequence, open or closure).

2.1.2. Learning style models

2.1.2.1. Neil Fleming's Visual, Auditory, and Kinesthetic (VAK) Learning Style Model (2008)

The Visual, Auditory, and Kinesthetic (VAK) learning styles use the three main sensory receivers: Visual, Auditory, and Kinesthetic (movement) to determine the dominant learning style. Learners use all three modalities to receive and learn new information and experiences. However, according to the VAK or modality theory, one or two of these receiving styles is

normally dominant. This dominant style defines the best way for a person to learn new information by filtering what is to be learned. Classically, our learning style is forced upon us through life like this: In grades kindergarten to third, new information is presented to us kinesthetically; grades 4 to 8 are visually presented; while grades 9 to college and on into the business environment, information is presented to us mostly through auditory means, such as lectures. Auditory learners often talk to themselves. They also may move their lips and read out loud. They may have difficulty with reading and writing tasks. They often do better when talking to a colleague or a tape recorder and hearing what was said. Visual learners have two sub-channels linguistic and spatial. Learners who are visual linguists like to learn through written language such as reading and writing tasks. They remember what has been written down, even if they do not read it more than once. They like to write down directions and pay better attention to lectures if they watch them. Learners who are visual-spatial usually have difficulty with the written language and do better with charts, demonstrations, videos, and other visual materials. They easily visualize faces and places by using their imagination and seldom get lost in new surroundings.

Kinesthetic learners do best while touching and moving. It also has two subchannels: kinesthetic (movement) and tactile (touch). They tend to lose concentration if there is little or no external stimulation or movement. When listening to lectures they may want to take notes for the sake of moving their hands. When reading, they like to scan the material first, and then focus on the details (get the big picture first). They typically use color highlighters and take notes by drawing pictures, diagrams, or doodling (Clark, 2014).

2.1.2.2. David Kolb's model (2001)

Kolb's model outlines two related approaches toward grasping experience: Concrete Experience and Abstract Conceptualization, as well as two related approaches toward transforming experience: Reflective Observation and Active Experimentation. According to Kolb's model, the ideal learning process engages all four of these modes in response to situational demands; they form a learning cycle from experience to observation to conceptualization to experimentation and back to experience. In order for learning to be effective, Kolb postulated all four of these approaches must be incorporated.

Kolb classified learning styles into four types. First, diverging learning style refers to strong imaginative ability and discussion. Second, assimilating learning style indicates strong inductive reasoning and the creation of theories. Third, converging learning style reflects strong practical "hands-on" application of theories. Fourth, accommodating learning style refers to strong "hands-on" practical doing.

The Grasha - Riechmann Student Learning Styles Scale (GRSLSS) was developed to measure cognitive and affective behaviors of students instead of perceptual. It focuses on student attitudes toward learning, classroom activities, teachers, and peers; rather than studying the relationships among methods, student style, and achievement. The six learning styles are competitive, collaborative, avoidant, participant, dependent, and independent. Competitive learners learn the material in order to perform better than others in the class. They feel they must compete with other students in a course for the rewards that are offered. Collaborative learners learn by sharing ideas. They cooperate with teachers and peers and like to work with others.

Avoidant learners are not enthusiastic about learning content and attending class. They do not participate with students and teachers in the classroom. They are uninterested and overwhelmed by what goes on in class. Participant learners enjoy going to class and take responsibility for getting the most out of a course. Dependent learners view teachers and peers as sources of structure and support and look up to teachers for specific guidelines on what to do and how to do it. Independent learners prefer to work on their own but will listen to the ideas of others in the classroom. ("Learning styles", n.d.)

Reid (1987) was one of the first researchers who designed an instrument to identify the learning styles of English learners in ESL classrooms. She opted for the sensory learning style dimension to categorize the learning styles of ESL students. The Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire (PLSPQ) originated in 1984 which comprised six learning style preferences namely the visual, auditory, kinesthetic, tactile, group, and individual learning.

In short, styles are generally defined and studied in terms of three main components: physiological, cognitive, and affective.

This research was carried out using the perceptual learning style model of Reid, a prestigious expert in researching learning styles. This model is distinct from others because it focuses on the relationships among teaching techniques, student style, and academic achievement.

2.2. Previous studies

2.2.1. Research on students' learning styles

Reid (1987) carried out her research with approximately 1300 ESL students including Japanese, Arab, Korean, Chinese, Malay, and Spanish across the USA in 1987. The results revealed that ESL students and native speakers of English showed significant differences in terms of their perceptual and social learning style preferences. Most of the ESL students preferred kinesthetic and tactile learning while native speakers of English were less tactile than all ESL students and less kinesthetic than Korean, Arabic, Chinese and Spanish speakers. Most of the ESL students did not prefer group learning and native speakers of English rated group learning less than all the other groups.

Based on the scoring of PLSPQ scores range from 0 to 50. Reid (1987) provided three cut-off scores for major learning style preference (38-50), minor learning style preference (27-37), and negligible learning style preference (24 or less) to analyze the data received from the PLSPQ.

In addition, Reid (1987) stated that although there has been no significant difference resulting from statistical analysis for age as a variable influencing the perceptual learning style preferences of the students, age is still an affecting variable and that the older the students are, the more they prefer the auditory, visual, tactile and kinesthetic learning styles, gender, discipline and years of studying English also affect students' learning styles (Dunn, 1993). Studies have proven that males and females learn in different ways due to their distinct emotional, environmental, sociological, perceptual, and physiological attributes.

Reid (1995) was among the first researchers to design an instrument to identify the learning styles of non-native speakers of English in the ESL classroom. She used the sensory learning style dimension to categorize the diverse learning styles of ESL students. The Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire (PLSPQ) was originally designed to be used in the ESL classroom. The six learning style preferences in the instrument are visual, auditory, kinesthetic, tactile, group, and individual.

Stebbins (1995) replicated Reid's 1987 research with 660 adult ESL students and graduates and 121 native speakers of English at the University of Wyoming in 1993. Students' TOEFL scores were taken into account. Sixty-three countries, 43 language backgrounds, and 92 major fields were represented in the sample. The results of the study were parallel to the results of Reid's 1987 study.

Khmakhien (2012) demystified Thai learners' English learning style preferences and the impact of three variables: gender, the field of study, and learning experiences on preferred learning styles. 262 Thai university students studying English as a foreign language were randomly selected in this study. A 30-item Perceptual Learning-Style Preference Questionnaire was administered to collect data. The results indicated that Thai EFL learners preferred auditory learning most, followed by kinesthetic, group, tactile, visual, and individual learning, respectively. Among these three variables, the field of study is the most significant factor affecting the choice of learning styles. Pedagogically, to be successful in English language teaching, teaching styles should be matched to students' learning styles. Materials and classroom activities should also be compatible with their learning styles to help learners improve learning outcomes. The strengths of this article resulted from the factors contributing to language learning styles namely gender, fields of study, and learning experience which were clearly discussed. The findings enhanced more understanding of how Thai learners study English. However, some limitations should be acknowledged. The number of males and females participating in the study should be equal (102 males, 160 female). The data was collected based only on questionnaires without the researcher's observation in class to ensure the reliability of the findings.

2.2.2. Research on the effects of accommodating students' learning styles

Sauvola (2010) examined the relationship between 9th-grade pupils' learning styles and the activities used during English classes. To do this, she administered a questionnaire to 23 pupils. The questionnaire aimed to discover whether the activities are varied enough, what kinds of activities are done during classes and what the pupils think should be done to improve their learning. She also interviewed these pupils with a question about the compatibility of learning styles and English activities. The result of the study showed that there was a need to change the exercises used. In general, almost every pupil expressed a wish to increase the variety of activities, especially the use of technical tools such as the Internet, music, and television. However, one shortcoming remained in the study. The sample of the present study was small, with 23 pupils. Therefore, the results give only a glance at the situation in the English classrooms. Boys and girls have different preferred learning styles; thus, the author should describe boys' and girls' outlooks on the compatibility of their learning styles and English activities separately.

Wilson (2011) studied the correlations between matching students' learning style preferences and teachers' instructional strategies with academic achievement to identify the extent to which learning styles influence the educational process as well as the outcome of elementary students in terms of academic achievement. Participants for the study included students taken from a sample of 308 fourth grade students from thirteen classes in three school districts in northwestern South Carolina. The researcher collected student achievement data in the form of a scaled score in each academic content area, English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. In addition, participating students completed the styles of learning inventory in the fourth term of the school year. The researcher recorded all instructional strategies of participating teachers. She used a checklist to pair the instructional strategies with one or more of the learning style elements identified with the learning styles inventory. A complete match (e.g. high preference/high accommodation) received a score of zero, a complete mismatch (e.g. high preference/low accommodation) received a score of one, and a near match (e.g. high preference/moderate accommodation) received a score of one. This comparison of indications produced a degree of match score ranging from zero to 18 for each student in each academic content area included in the study. The results of this study demonstrate a clear discrepancy between the learning style preferences of students and strategies implemented by teachers. Academic achievement results proved that students in the same classroom experienced extremely different degrees of academic success. Receiving instruction from the same teachers, some students performed at highly proficient levels while others failed even to meet the basic requirements. Despite the effort to conduct careful research, the researcher still encountered some limitations as follows. First, the validity was not guaranteed due to the self-report instrumentation utilized to gather data concerning teachers' instructional strategies, Second, the study took place in the final quarter of the school year, it was impossible for the researcher to request refinement and clarification from all teachers, and some teachers stated their recorded strategies were not entirely typical for the year. Those things could affect the achieved degree of match scores.

Bui (2014) conducted a study on improving EFL classroom interaction by understanding students' learning styles. 150 students of 6 EFL classes of the intermediate level at the International Education Center of Hong Duc University in Thanh Hoa province were involved in the research. Besides, 9 full-time teachers aged 24-55, who had been teaching at the International Education Center, participated in the research. The study showed that teachers, as well as students, realize more about the importance of understanding learning styles to enhance students' interaction in the classroom. The thesis also found that the learners' interaction depends considerably on whether teaching styles match students' learning styles and how motivated they are. It was unlikely that the results would work in other cases since the scope of this study was quite small and limited, with only 150 students at the same level participating in the survey. The researcher did not figure out the clear correlation between students' motivation levels and classroom interaction as well as the growth of interaction among students or between the teacher and students.

Although a lot of research on accommodating students' learning styles has been carried out, most of it was conducted in foreign countries or ESL contexts. Therefore, I wanted to replicate research on teachers' perceptions of the importance of accommodating students' learning styles in an EFL context of a center for foreign languages in Can Tho University to

investigate teachers' understanding and their attitudes towards the importance of accommodating students' learning styles.

3. Research methodology

3.1. Research design

This study was descriptive. Questionnaires were administered to collect quantitative data. The study was conducted at the Center for Foreign Languages of Can Tho University. The data were analyzed using SPSS software to answer the research questions.

3.2. Participants

The sample chosen for this study came from the Center for Foreign Languages of Can Tho University. 50 teachers who have been teaching in this center were invited to respond to the questionnaire. Those teachers ranged from 24 to 55 years old. All of them graduated with a university bachelor's or a master's degree in English teaching.

3.3. Data Collection Instruments

The instrument consisted of a questionnaire. It consisted of two clusters. Cluster 1 measured teachers' understanding of characteristics of learning styles, and cluster 2 evaluated teachers' attitudes toward the importance of accommodating students' learning styles.

3.3.1. Teachers' understanding of students' learning styles

The questionnaire contained the background information of teachers' profiles that indicated their age and gender. It was partially adopted from Reid (1995)'s Perceptual Learning Style Instrument. The questionnaire contained 18 items covering the characteristics of six learning style preferences: visual, auditory, group, kinesthetic, tactile, and individual. In particular, items 5, 8, 16 defined the characteristics of visual learners as learning by reading what teachers wrote on the board or instructions in books. Items 1, 6, 7 attributed auditory learners to students who remembered better by hearing. Items 2, 12, 13 characterized kinesthetic learners as those who preferred to learn by doing. The characteristics of tactile learners were described in items 9, 11, and 15. They were people who learned more when they can make a model or toys in projects. Items 3, 4, 14 denoted group learners as those who preferred to study with others. Individual learners were described in items 10, 17, 18 as people who learned better when working alone. The participants were invited to indicate their options on a five-point Likert scale namely SD — Strongly Disagree (1), D — Disagree (2), UND - Undecided (3), A — Agree (4), SA — Strongly Agree (5). Mean, Standard Deviation, and One and Paired Sample Test were carried out to obtain the figures to assess teachers' understanding of learning styles.

3.3.2. Teachers' attitudes toward the importance of accommodating students' learning styles

This questionnaire consisted of 12 items indicating the importance of accommodating students' learning styles. In particular, items 19, 24, 28 emphasized the importance of accommodating students' learning styles in enhancing students' involvement and interactions between teachers and students. Items 20, 22, 26 mentioned the significance of accommodating students' learning styles in students' retention of knowledge and attaining better academic results. The usefulness of accommodating students' learning styles in reducing discrepancy among

students' performance and monotony was covered in items 21, 23, and 30. The role of accommodating students' learning styles in proposing ideas for teachers to select teaching techniques, tasks, multimedia, and lesson planning was indicated in items 25, 27, and 29. The participants were invited to indicate their options on a five-point Likert scale namely SD — Strongly Disagree (1), D — Disagree (2), UND - Undecided (3), A — Agree (4), SA — Strongly Agree (5). Mean, Standard Deviation, and One and Paired Sample Test were carried out to obtain the score to evaluate teachers' attitudes toward the importance of accommodating students' learning styles.

3.4. Procedure

First, questionnaires were delivered to 30 participants for piloting to measure the reliability (Cronbach alpha) before administering. The reliability of Cronbach's alpha of the questionnaires is relatively high ($\alpha = .85$). Preliminary data also reflected the frequency of options for each item. Second, questionnaires were delivered to the participants via email or in-person to collect data on their perceptions about the importance of accommodating students' learning styles.

3.5. Data analysis

The data obtained from the questionnaires were subjected to the Statistics Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for data analysis. The scale was coded from 1 for strongly disagree to 5 as strongly agree. First, the scale test for testing the reliability of the questionnaires was run. The result shows that the reliability of Cronbach's alpha of the questionnaires is relatively high ($\alpha = .85$).

4. Findings and discussion

4.1. Teachers' perceptions of the importance of accommodating students' learning styles

Table 1. Teachers' perceptions of the importance of accommodating students' learning styles

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
MeanAll	50	3.37	4.87	3.99	.34

As can be seen from Table 1, the mean score of teachers' perceptions of the importance of accommodating students' learning styles ($M = 3.99$) is approximate to scale 4 in the five-point scale of the questionnaire. In other words, the mean score indicates that teachers' have high perceptions of the importance of accommodating students' learning styles.

The One-Sample T-Test was run on the mean score of teachers' perceptions of the importance of accommodating students' learning styles ($M = 3.99$) and the test value 4.0. The result shows that there is no difference between the mean score of teachers' perceptions of accommodating students' learning styles ($M = 3.99$) and the test value 4.0 ($t(49) = -.22$; $p = .82$).

A comparison of the mean score between male and female teachers' perceptions of the importance of accommodating students' learning styles

Table 2. Male and female teachers' perceptions of accommodating students' learning styles

Group Statistics					
	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Mean All	Male	20	3.96	.34	.075
	Female	30	4.01	.34	.063

The Independent Samples T-Test was run on the mean scores of male ($M_m = 3.96$; $SD_m = .34$) and female ($M_f = 4.01$; $SD_f = .34$) teachers' perceptions of the importance of accommodating students' learning styles respectively. The results show that there is no difference between male and female teachers' perceptions of the importance of accommodating students' learning styles ($t(48) = -.47$; $p = .64$). Both male and female teachers perceive the importance of accommodating students' learning styles to the same extent.

4.2. Teachers' understanding of characteristics of students' learning styles

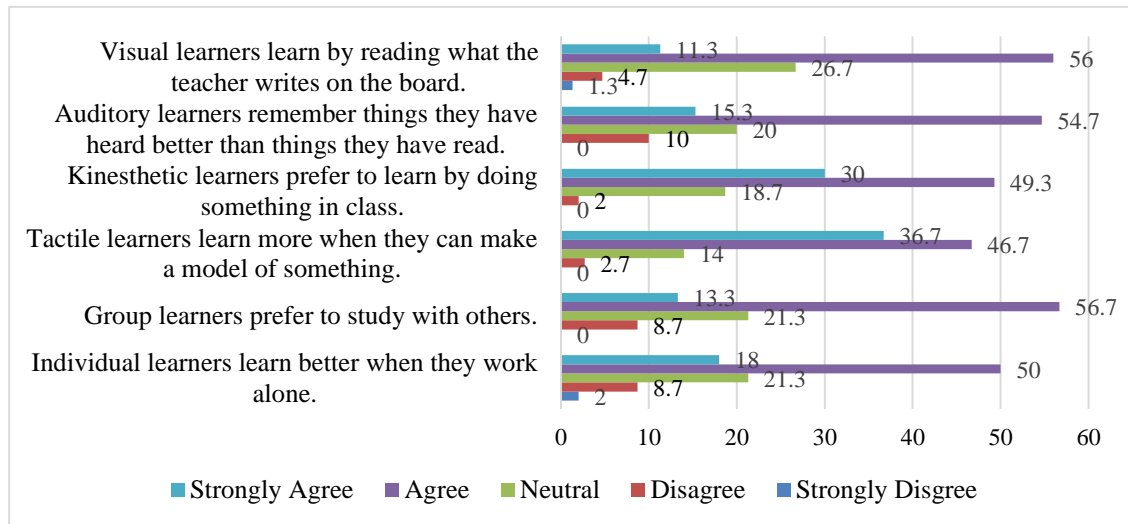


Figure 1. Teachers' understanding of characteristics of students' learning styles

The data from Figure 1 suggests that the participants have a clear recognition relating to the characteristics of visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile learners. However, they have little understanding of the characteristics of the group and individual learners.

Table 3. Teachers' understanding of characteristics of students' learning styles

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
MeanUn	50	3.17	4.78	3.87	.35

As shown in Table 3, the mean score of teachers' understanding of characteristics of learning styles ($M = 3.87$) does not reach the scale 4 in the five-point scale. In other words, the mean is just above the mid-level in the designed five-point scale of the questionnaire, indicating that the level of teachers' understanding of characteristics of learning styles is not high, just above average.

4.2.1. A comparison of the mean score of teachers' understandings of characteristics of students' learning styles to a test value

The One-Sample T-Test was run on the mean score of teachers' understanding of characteristics of learning styles ($M = 3.87$) and the test value 4.0. The result shows that there is a significant difference between the mean score of teachers' understanding of characteristics of learning styles ($M = 3.87$) and the test value 4.0 ($t(49) = -2.70$; $p = .00$). The test results show

that the mean score of teachers' understanding of characteristics of learning styles was significantly different from the test value.

4.2.2. A comparison of the mean score between male and female teachers' understandings of characteristics of students' learning styles

Table 4. Male and female teachers' understanding of characteristics of students' learning styles

Group Statistics					
	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
MeanUn	Male	20	3.84	.33	.07
	Female	30	3.87	.37	.06

The Independent Samples T-Test was run on the mean scores of male ($M_m = 3.84$; $SD_m = .33$) and female ($M_f = 3.87$; $SD_f = .37$) teachers' understanding of characteristics of learning styles respectively. The results show that there is no difference between male and female teachers' understanding of characteristics of students' learning styles ($t(48) = -.34$; $p = .73$). Both male and female teachers understand learning style characteristics to the same extent.

In comparison to the perceptual learning style inventory designed by Reid (1987) which featured the characteristics of each learning style, the results of the current study reflected that the participants had a basic understanding of these characteristics.

4.3. Teachers' evaluations of the importance of accommodating students' learning styles

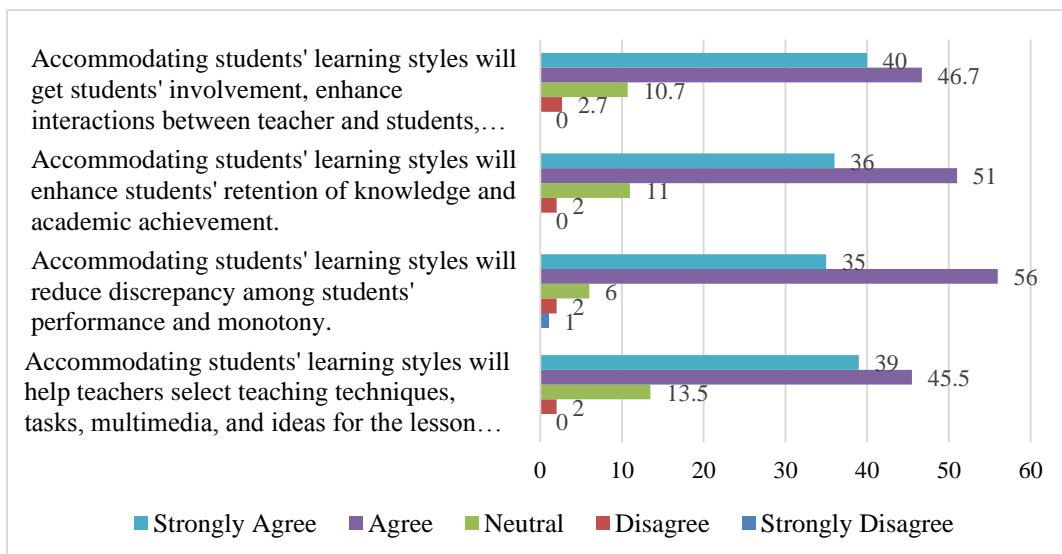


Figure 2. Teachers' evaluations of the importance of accommodating students' learning styles

The data from Figure 2 suggests that the participants highly evaluate the significance of accommodating students' learning styles to the success of teachers' teaching and students' learning. In particular, most participants agree that accommodating students' learning styles will reduce discrepancy among students' performance and monotony. A considerable number of participants indicate that accommodating students' learning styles can enhance interactions, help students remember knowledge better, and attain higher academic achievement.

Table 5. Teachers’ evaluations of the importance of accommodating students’ learning styles

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
MeanAtt	50	3.33	5.00	4.18	.39

As can be seen from Table 5, the total mean score of teachers’ evaluations of the importance of accommodating students’ learning styles ($M = 4.18$) is slightly higher than the scale 4 on the five-point scale. In other words, the mean is just slightly above the high level in the designed five-point scale of the questionnaire, indicating that teachers’ attitude toward the importance of accommodating students’ learning styles is fairly high.

4.3.1. A comparison of the total mean score of teachers’ evaluations of the importance of accommodating students’ learning styles to a test value

The One-Sample T-Test was run on the mean score of teachers’ evaluations of the importance of accommodating students’ learning styles ($M = 4.18$) and the test value 5.0. The result shows that there is a significant difference between the mean score of teachers’ evaluations of the importance of accommodating students’ learning styles ($M = 4.17$) and the test value 5.0 ($t(49) = -14.94; p = .00$). The test results show that the mean score of teachers’ evaluations of the importance of accommodating students’ learning styles was significantly different from the test value.

4.3.2. A comparison of the mean score between male and female teachers’ attitudes toward the importance of accommodating students’ learning styles

Table 6. Male and female teachers’ attitude towards accommodating students’ learning styles

Group Statistics					
	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
MeanAtt	Male	20	4.13	.43	.09
	Female	30	4.20	.37	.07

The Independent Samples T-Test was run on the mean scores of male ($M_m = 4.13; SD_m = .43$) and female ($M_f = 4.20; SD_f = .37$) teachers’ attitudes toward the importance of accommodating students’ learning styles. The results show that there is no difference between male and female teachers’ attitudes toward the importance of accommodating students’ learning styles ($t(48) = -.55; p = .58$). Both male and female teachers evaluate the importance of accommodating students’ learning styles to the same extent.

The results from the questionnaire reflect a high level of perceptions among teachers. The mean score is approximately equal to the maximum score on the five-point scale.

The result of this study is similar to that of Sauvola’s (2010) research. In Sauvola’s study, the result showed that there was a need to change the exercises used to get students’ involvement. The result in the current study indicates that most teachers agree that changing teaching techniques is necessary to get students’ participation in the learning process.

In comparison to Wilson’s (2011) research on the correlations between matching students’ learning style preferences and teachers’ instructional strategies with academic

achievement, the participant's responses in the current study are similar to that of Wilson's finding. That is, the more students' learning styles match the instructional strategies, the better academic success they may gain. However, in Wilson's study, students demonstrated a clear discrepancy while in the current study, the participants thought teachers should accommodate students' learning styles to avoid this.

Similarly, the result of the questionnaire is consistent with that of Bui's (2014) investigation on improving EFL classroom interaction by understanding students' learning styles. In his study, teachers realized the importance of understanding learning styles to enhance students' interactions in the classroom. It is additional to this study that understanding learning styles also enhances teacher and students' interactions.

5. Implications

The findings imply that teachers believed it is important to accommodate students' learning styles in order to help students achieve higher academic performance and improve interactions. However, teachers do not fully comprehend the characteristics of learning styles. This suggests that teachers need to be trained in both theory and practice on learning styles.

In addition to the placement tests at the start of the course, universities, schools, and centers for foreign languages should have a survey form to characterize students' learning styles. As a result, teachers will be aware of not just their pupils' English proficiency levels, but also their preferred learning styles.

6. Conclusion

The research reported in this thesis revealed that the participants have high perceptions of the importance of accommodating students' learning styles. The results also revealed that teachers have a basic understanding of the characteristics of students' learning styles in comparison to the perceptual learning style inventory designed by Reid (1987). Most teachers admitted the importance of accommodating students' learning styles. They indicated that accommodating students' learning styles enhanced interactions, retained knowledge, and improved academic performance among students through the questionnaire.

There were some unavoidable limitations in the research. First, it was conducted only on a small size of participants. Thus, it is hard to generalize the result to the teaching context in public high schools and colleges. Second, if open-ended questions were used as instruments, diverse data would be collected.

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NHẬN THỨC CỦA GIÁO VIÊN VỀ TẦM QUAN TRỌNG CỦA VIỆC THÍCH ỨNG VỚI PHONG CÁCH HỌC TẬP CỦA SINH VIÊN

Tóm tắt: Nghiên cứu này nhằm điều tra nhận thức của giáo viên về tầm quan trọng của việc thích ứng với phong cách học của sinh viên tại một Trung tâm Ngoại ngữ ở Đồng bằng sông Cửu Long, Việt Nam. Dữ liệu được thu thập thông qua bảng câu hỏi. Cụ thể là 50 giáo viên trả lời bảng câu hỏi. Những giáo viên này có độ tuổi từ 24 đến 55 tuổi. Tất cả đều tốt nghiệp đại học hoặc thạc sĩ về giảng dạy tiếng Anh. Họ đang giảng dạy tiếng Anh tại Trung tâm Ngoại ngữ trường Đại học Cần Thơ. Kết quả chỉ ra rằng giáo viên thể hiện nhận thức tích cực về tầm quan trọng của việc thích ứng với phong cách học của sinh viên. Giáo viên tham gia nghiên cứu khẳng định rằng việc thích ứng với phong cách học tập của sinh viên đã nâng cao khả năng tương tác, ghi nhớ kiến thức và cải thiện kết quả học tập giữa các sinh viên. Các kết quả nghiên cứu đã đóng góp vào việc vận dụng nhiều kỹ thuật giảng dạy khác nhau, đồng thời đưa ra các đề xuất cho các nghiên cứu trong tương lai về lĩnh vực này.

Từ khóa: Phong cách học tập, thích ứng, học viên trong môi trường tiếng Anh là ngoại ngữ