

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement and Significance of the Problems

In our globalization, it's without doubt to say that learning English is more and more important for students, not only for their study, but for their daily life, their future career, and taking part in the contemporary globalization trend (Hou 2009). Moreover, English has been used to communicate, exchange knowledge, thoughts, cultures and traditions, and gain advanced technologies. It also has been used as a significant tool to compete in world markets and businesses, to negotiate either in political and social issues, to get better understanding and have mutual corroboration among countries. At present, we can obviously see that there are more than fifty countries have selected English as their official language and have used it in varied areas of government and business (CIA 2008).

In Thailand, Office of Education Council also realizes how significant English is. The Second Decade of Education Reform (2011-2018) has focused on know-how of educational improvement by enhancing 3% per year of English ability and foreign language with economic significance (Office of Education Council 2011). Foreign languages, like English plays an essential role in learning for specific purposes : career, education or personal interest (Banbang 2010). According to the Thai National Education Act, it can be summarized that the curriculum in organizing learning process should indicate to the learner's needs (Singhasiri, Darasawang and Srimavin 2004). Meanwhile, the government's educational policy has focused on reform of learning process. Student-centered learning is an approach to education emphasizing on the students' needs, rather than those of others involved in the educational process, such as teachers and administrators. This approach has many implications for the design of curriculum, course content, and interactivity of courses (www.wikipedia.org, retrieved on 22 February 2011).

If educational and business institutions in the twenty-first century expect to prepare an potential and high-performing manpower for global economy, technology education must be realized as fundamental to accomplishing manpower competencies (Bybee and Starkweather

2006). Finding a ways in which students may learn the most competent and efficient manner is a serious concern of education (Oklahoma State Department of Education 1993). An important component of learning style theory is the belief that teachers are able to facilitate their students effectively by understanding how they learn best, or recognizing students' preferred leaning styles (Ellis 1989)

Furthermore, Considering the Sub-Committees on Learning Reform of the Thai National Education Commission and the Thai Ministry of Education, we can see that they have removed the teacher-centeredness from Thai education, and supplanted it with learner-centeredness thorough learning reform implemented in 1999, after the teacher-centered approach had been examined as unsuccessful with Thai education since 1996(Phungphol 2005). Learners were shifted to be the central players and the roles of teachers were switched as facilitators, not classroom disciplinarians in education any longer. Under the Thai National Education Act (NEA) of B.E. 2542 in 1999:

Within this paradigm, education should be based on the principle that all learners are capable of learning and self-development, and are regarded as being most important. At the same time the teaching-learning process should aim at enabling the learners to develop themselves at their own pace and to the best of their potentiality (1999: section 22).

Consequently, the learners have been the central figure in conducting research on language teaching and learning procedures until now (Satta-Udom 2007). One of the teachers' role is to adapt the idea of the learners-centered approach in teaching and learning language (Nunan 1988; Rost & Ross 1991). Students' requirement is to be aware of their learning styles since making students aware of earning styles may stimulate them to realize the importance of appropriate learning styles for discipline or subject, and also, such style may used to change learning situations (Poon Teng Fatt 1993). According to Pask (1977), knowing one's learning styles is significant in learning. Consequently, student should be made aware of their learning styles. It is the responsibility of teachers to guarantee this. As a result, this kind of survey may be just what teachers need to assess the learning styles of their students and then make accessible the result to the students.

Universally, it is known that there is a diversity of learning styles and teachers have the responsibility to adapt their teaching strategies to student learning styles and disposition in order to better facilitate learning (Sander 1990). Students are distinctive in their characters,

(Reid, 1987; Gardner, 1989; Dunn, 2000) Each student perceives and processes information in different ways. Felder (1995) claims that students, who feel uncomfortable about their learning in class rooms may ascribe their failures to false discretions. This leads to give up learning in a particular class.

Unquestionably, the way teachers teach should meet the way students learn. Educators' concern should be students' learning styles; moreover they are able to adapt their teaching styles to match students' learning styles (Poon Teng Fatt 2000). Likewise, teaching and learning styles refers to teachers and learners' behaviors or actions displaying in learning exchange (Heimlich and Norland 2002). Learning styles are incorporated with affective, temperamental, and motivational structure of total human personality Keefe and ferrel 1990).

Thus, there is a need to investigate the model of learning style differences between students to understand the application of an individual's unique learning styles. Consciousness of the learning styles of the learners's will assist the teacher, instructor, adult educator, trainers, course designers, program and training developers to evolve a curriculum addressing individual learning needs (Pallapu 2008). Baldwin and Sabry (2003) stated that “research continue to build a strong case for the impact of learning styles in better understanding how learners learn and thus how to support them in their task” (p.329). Hence, investigating in students' learning styles should be a significant way to realize different models of students' learning styles in order that teachers can enhance their students to learn at their own pace and to the best of their potentiality.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

1.2.1 To study models of English learning styles of Industrial Education Students at King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Ladkrabang

1.2.2 To compare models of English learning styles of Industrial Education Students at King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Ladkrabang with different genders and English reading abilities.

1.3 Scopes of the study

1.3.1 Population

The population is the second year undergraduate Industrial Education Students studying during the first semester of 2012 academic year at King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Ladkrabang (KMITL).

1.3.2 Sample

The sample is all 40 second year undergraduate Industrial Education Students in the field of Applied Arts, majoring in English and enrolling the course of "Reading2" during the first semester of 2012 academic year at King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Ladkrabang (KMITL).

1.3.3 Variables Used in This Study

1.3.3.1 Independent Variables are students' personal factors: genders: male and female, and levels of English reading abilities: high, mid, low.

1.3.3.2 Dependent Variables are students' models of English learning styles

1.3.4 Research Questions

1.3.4.1 What are the models of English learning styles of Industrial Education Students at King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Ladkrabang?

1.3.4.2 Do KMITL Industrial Education Students with different genders and different English reading abilities appear to have the same models of English learning styles?

1.4 Definitions or Terms Used

1.4.1 Learning Styles: an individual's natural or habitual pattern of acquiring and processing information in learning situations

1.4.2 Models of Learning Styles: six categories of the framework of the Perceptual Learning Styles: visual learning styles, auditory learning styles, tactile learning styles, kinesthetic learning styles, group styles and individual learning styles (Reid, 1987)

1.4.2.1 Visual Learning Style: the style used in order to learn more effectively through visual perception.

1.4.2.2 Auditory Learning Style: the style used in order to learn more effectively through auditory perception.

1.4.2.3 Kinesthetic Learning Style: the style used in order to learn more effectively through whole-body movement.

1.4.2.4 Tactile Learning Style: the style used in order to learn more effectively through touch and hand-on activity.

1.4.2.5 Group Learning Style: the style used in order to learn more effectively through working with others.

1.4.2.6 Individual Learning Style: the style used in order to learn more effectively through working alone.

1.4.3 Genders: male and female of all 40 second year undergraduate Industrial Education Students in the field of Applied Arts, majoring in English and enrolling the course of “Reading 2” during the first semester of 2012 academic year at King Mongkut’s Institute of Technology Ladkrabang (KMITL).

1.4.3 Levels of English reading abilities: three levels of English reading abilities: high, mid, low were designed according to the results of “Reading 2” Final Examination. This examination was a multiple-choice test of various passages in a diversity of content areas, in which results were used as criterion to determine the reading ability of students in relation to a task performed in a limited time frame. In order to pass the test, students had to be able to read and comprehend the passages including answering comprehension questions very quickly and in an accurate manner.

Based on the students’ results of “Reading 2” Final Examination which were issued during the first semester of the 2012 academic year, the students recommended as *high English reading ability level* in this study had to possess the following characteristics: they had to obtain a score of at least 75%. In contrast, the students recommended as *mid English reading ability level* had to obtain a score of 65-74%, and the students

recommended as *low English reading ability level* had to obtain a score of no more than 64%.

1.5 Scopes or Limitation of the study

- 1.5.1 This study focused only on investigating the models of learning styles of 40 second-year KMITL Industrial Education students enrolling in “Reading 2” during the first semester of the 2012 academic year.
- 1.5.2 This study focuses on only Thai: cannot be generalized to other languages.
- 1.5.3 The sample in this study deals with small sample size.
- 1.5.4 In this study, a self-report questionnaire: the Perceptual Learning Styles Preference Questionnaire (PLSPQ) with the six categories of perceptual learning styles: visual learning styles, auditory learning styles, tactile learning styles, kinesthetic learning styles, group styles and individual learning styles (Reid, 1987) was used as a framework to identify students’ models of English learning styles.