

# IDENTIFYING LEARNING STYLES OF STUDENTS IN DEVELOPING LISTENING SKILL IN ENGLISH CLASSES

Nguyen Thi Dieu Hien\*

Quang Dien Centre for Continuing Education and Career Education

*Received: 25/07/2017; Revised: 15/08/2017; Accepted: 21/08/2017*

**Abstract:** The project “Identifying learning styles of students in developing listening skill in English classes” has been carried out with a view to provide the effectiveness of teaching and learning listening skill for students. Qualitative and quantitative methods were used to collect and analyze questionnaire, observation, interview with 90 students of grade 11 and 10 teachers from English classes, which led to the identification of critical issues related to listening learning and teaching. The findings contain: (1) Learning styles affect the results of learning listening skill differently; (2) Identifying learning styles brings considerable benefits to the area of teaching and learning listening skill.

**Key words:** benefits, identification, learning styles, listening skill

## 1. Introduction

English teaching involves four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Among them, listening is a difficult language skill to master through the teaching and learning process. Our communication is mainly based on listening because it is the foundation for effective interaction. Failure to listen is probably the cause of more interpersonal problems than any other aspects of human behavior.

It has been estimated that adults spend almost half their communication time on listening, and students may receive as much as ninety percents of their in-school information through listening to instructors and to one another. Often, however, English learners do not recognize the level of effort that goes into developing listening ability. According to English teachers, the reasons for this include both extrinsic aspects (such as teachers’ instruction before listening, unclear tape scripts of listening, stress, etc.) and intrinsic ones (for examples, uninteresting topics of listening, the lack of motivation, and so on). Therefore, it seems to be difficult for learners to learn a language that is not their mother tongue. The development of listening skill should get considerable attention in our schools nowadays. English teachers have therefore been searching for ways to improve students’ listening ability, as well as to plant and nurture students’ love for this subject. Apart from innovations that have been made in teaching practices themselves, so far many different supplementary strategies have been applied, such as top-down strategies, bottom-up strategies, cooperative listening, etc. Each of these listening strategies, when carried out in the English classroom, has its own benefits and also reveals certain drawbacks.

To learn English effectively, each learner used different strategies. Some learning strategies are specific to particular individuals, that is, not every strategy works best for all

---

\* Email: dieuhien011286@gmail.com

learners, according to Djiwandono (2006). For instance, a student in a class used “imagining” strategy to understand a spoken message having to do with asking for and giving direction. Some students commented that this strategy would never work for them; they would rather use inferring strategy, which they claimed to be also successful. Hence, Djiwandono (2006) came to a conclusion that the differences among learners should be taken as evidence that strategies vary in effectiveness, depending on the learner.

In addition, the mismatch occurring between the teacher and the student results in the significant influences on students’ motivation and attitudes toward the class and the subject. To teach listening effectively, therefore, the language teachers must be aware of how the students approach their learning in general and how they prefer to develop their listening skill in particular.

To cope with such problems, one of the effective approaches for a teacher to take is to address a variety of students’ learning styles within their teaching plans. Identifying students’ learning preferences through a brief questionnaire administered at the beginning of the course should be carried out. The students can understand their preferred learning styles and teachers can work effectively with them through suitable teaching methods that motivate students’ interest in English listening and encourage them in active thinking and communication.

Identifying learning styles can provide a basis for motivating individuals to alter personal listening behavior, to develop teaching and learning listening skill more effectively for both learners and teachers. Seeing its benefits to language teaching and learning, and considering the fact that this is still new to the English teaching context in English classes, the author have conducted this research to investigate the process of “*Identifying learning styles of students in developing listening skill in English classes*”.

### ***Research questions***

1. What are benefits that teachers will achieve in teaching listening skill from identifying learning styles?
2. What are the benefits that the students will achieve in learning listening skill from identifying learning styles?

### ***Purpose and significance of the study***

This research aims to evaluate the current situations of EFL learning listening skill of students in English classes at Quoc Hoc high school from the perspectives of learning styles. This study also makes an effort to recognize the various sets of students’ learning styles and to find out the benefits of identifying learning styles in developing listening skill as well as to discuss the influences of learning style factors on teaching and learning listening skill. Certain practical ideas to make listening learning more effective with the application of learning style-based activities in the listening classroom will be presented.

Since students’ learning preferences have yet to be identified in the teaching of listening to eleventh graders at any high schools, it is believed that this study will shed more light on and have some inspirational effects in the area of teaching listening, as well as give me new

experiences in teaching listening skill as an EFL teacher. More importantly, through this research, we hope to introduce a type of listening exercise that is based on learning styles theory, through which students have better awareness of their personal preferences and utilize them in developing listening skill. This in its turn is hoped to make listening become a more interesting subject to eleventh graders.

## **2. Theoretical framework**

### **2.1. Listening skill and learning styles**

#### ***2.1.1. Listening skill for teaching listening skill***

Every day we listen to many different things in many different ways. They can be conversations with a colleague, the TV news, or a new music CD. In our native language, we seem to automatically know the ways and the purposes why we listen. To language learners, listening is more challenging. It is a fundamental language skill and has been defined by many authors.

Thomlison's (1984) definition of listening includes "active listening" which goes beyond comprehending as understanding the message content, to comprehension as an act of empathetic understanding of the speaker. Similarly, Ronald and Roskelly (1995) clarify:

Listening is as an active process requiring the same skills of prediction, hypothesizing, revising, and generalizing that writing and reading demand; and these authors present specific exercises to make students active learners who are aware of the "inner voice" one hears when writing.

Therefore, as Dobkin and Pace (2003) carefully introduce active listeners choose to focus on the moment, are aware of interactions as they unfold, respond appropriately, and resist philosophical and psychological distraction (p.93). Gordon (1985) also states that empathy is essential to listening and contends that it is more than a polite attempt to identify a speaker's perspectives. Rather more importantly, empathetic understanding expands to "egocentric pro-social behavior" that altruistically accepts concern for the speaker's welfare and interests.

Although the definition is expressed in different ways, most of the authors agree that listening is the ability to identify and understand what others are saying. This involves the understanding of a speaker's accent or pronunciation, his grammar and his vocabulary, and grasping his meaning (Howatt and Dakin, 1974), constructing the meaning, negotiating meaning, responding, creating meaning through involvement, imagination and empathy (Rost, 1994). An able listener is capable of doing these things simultaneously.

#### ***2.1.2. Principles for teaching listening skill***

Firstly, using authentic texts and introducing them as naturally and realistically as possible (Forseth et al., 1994). Forseth et al. explain that real language is important since it has background noise as well as interruptions that happen in real situations. In addition, the authentic texts often have different voice types and accents. This helps students familiar with them. Ross (2006) added that by using authentic materials, students are given the chances to develop the skills needed to comprehend and to use the language that is commonly found in the

real life.

Secondly, using various listening text (Forseth et al., 1994). These can be conversations, jokes, lectures, news, songs, narratives, etc. This is useful for students to be familiar with different things they may hear in the real life.

Thirdly, using meaning-based task (Forseth et al., 1994). Forseth et al. state that listeners must not only hear the sounds but also understand the meaning. They explain that because the main purpose we teach listening for students is for communication, teaching listening should pay attention to meaning. It states that teachers should “emphasize understanding above repetition and meaning over form” (Forseth et al., 1994, p.73).

Fourthly, teachers should state a specific purpose for listening tasks (Forseth et al., 1994). Teachers can design tasks which practise one or more of the different sub-skills for students such as listening for main idea, specific information, summarizing and so on. Forseth et al. (1994) recommended that teachers should give the purpose before the tasks begin by writing questions like *what's wrong with the man?* or *what's the main idea of the listening text?*. When we let students know the objectives of the tasks, they can better focus on specific vocabulary acquisition, grammar practice, listening for different purposes, and so on (Ross, 2006).

Fifthly, the preparation before listening is essential. The students should be introduced about the text before listening to it (Harmer, 1998). To do this, teachers may let students look at pictures, discuss the topic, read the questions first or predict what is coming. This will help the students to prepare for listening the text and focus on it (Forseth et al., 1994). Teachers also need to listen to the text before taking it into the class. This is useful because teachers can prepare for problems, noise, and accents. Moreover, teachers can judge whether students can listen to the text and do the task go with it or not.

Sixthly, teachers do not need to pre-teach all vocabulary items. Without pre-teaching new words, students may develop the skill of guessing the meanings of the words from the context. However, teachers can teach words that are essential for understanding the main idea of the text (Forseth et al., 1994).

Finally, according to Harmer (1998), students should be given more than one time to listen. Often students cannot catch the full meaning the first time listening. It just gives the students an idea of what the listening material sounds like so subsequent listening may be easier for students (Harmer, 1998).

Those principles are necessary for all teachers of English. Teachers should follow them to make their listening classes more interesting and attract students.

### ***2.1.3. Learning styles and classification of learning styles***

#### *Learning styles*

According to Keefe (1979), learning styles might be thought of as “cognitive, affective, and physiological traits that are relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive, interact with, and respond to the learning environment” (p.4). More simply, Skehan (1991) defines learning style as “a general predisposition, voluntary or not, toward processing information in a

particular way” (p. 288). Similarly, The Duns (1993, 1999) indicates in his research: “Learning style is the way in which each person begins to concentrate on process, internalize, and remember new and difficult academic information or skills.”

Also, learning styles are internally based on characteristics of individuals for the intake or understanding of new information (Reid, 1995). All learners have individual attributes relating to their learning processes. Some people may rely heavily on visual presentation; others may prefer spoken language; still others may respond better to hands-on activities. It is evident that people learn differently and at different paces because of their biological and psychological differences (Reiff 1992).

Learning styles vary with age, achievement, culture, and individual-processing of new information. During the past decade, many researchers have been researching and employing various learning styles - strategies in elementary levels as well as secondary levels. Their experimenting with alternative strategies for teaching English found significantly higher achievement when the strategies were used with individuals’ learning styles.

Although students may have preferred learning styles, this is not to say that they cannot use other styles. To expose learners to other learning styles that help them learn listening more effectively, new directions in teaching approach should be discovered by employing innovative ideas from other fields such as drama, music, and especially psychology.

#### *Classification of learning styles*

Ways in which an individual characteristically acquires, retains and retrieves information are collectively termed the individual’s learning style. Guild and Garger (1985) state in their research that learning styles have been extensively discussed in the educational psychology literature and specifically in the context of learning, and over 30 learning style assessment instruments have been developed in the past three decades.

Dunns (1993, 1994) refer to 21 elements of learning styles classified into five variables:

- Environmental
- Emotional
- Sociological
- Physiological
- Psychological

Moreover, it is clearer when Richard and Rockhart (1994) mention some notions of styles and learning

- Concrete learning style: learners use active and indirect means of taking in the processing information.

- Analytical learning style: learners are independent, like to solve problems and enjoy tracking down ideas and developing principles on their own.

- Communicative learning style: learners prefer a social approach to learning.

- Authority-oriented style: learners are said to be responsible and dependable with what they learn.

More specially, Reid (1995) divides learning styles into three major categories: cognitive learning style, sensory learning style and personality learning style.

For cognitive learning style, Brown (2006) adds more details in his book: “this is the way we learn things in general and the way we attack a problem seem to hinge on a rather amorphous link between personality and cognition.”

- Field-independent and Field-dependent learning styles: For Field-dependent students, they find it more difficult to see the parts in a complex whole and rely on others' ideas when solving problems and are good at interpersonal relationships. These students learn best when information is presented in context. They are often more fluent language learners with abstract learning area and refer to a set of thoughts, ideals, or feeling from which your task is to perceive specific relevant subjects. In contrast to this, a field-independent style enables you to distinguish parts from a whole to concentrate on something. In another way, field-independent students can learn most effectively step-by-step and with sequential instruction and easily separate important thing from a complex or confusing background. They tend to rely on themselves and their own thought-system when solving problems. They are often more accurate language learners.

- Analytic and global styles: The analytic students work more effectively alone and at his own pace. On the contrary, the global learners work better in groups.

- Reflective and Impulsive styles: For the reflective learners, they work best when they have time to consider new information before responding. The impulsive students learn more effectively when they can response to new information immediately and as language learners, they are risk takers.

For sensory learning styles, there are two kinds of perceptual and environmental styles.

To perceptual preferred learning styles, this type is defined as follows:

- Visual learners are those who learn primarily with their eyes. It is important for the teacher, to use resources that must be seen or read: the chalkboard, posters and bulletin boards; books, magazines, and manuals; programmed learning materials; drawings, pictures, graphs and diagrams; films, filmstrips, transparencies and computer monitor if available. Visual learners prefer to have written assignments, and it is wise for the teacher to provide written evaluations.

- Auditory Learners learn primarily with their ears. The teacher should therefore provide many sources for hearing: lectures, discussions and small group talk are good, as are records, tapes and videotapes, using stereo, radio, and television. The teacher should give precise oral directions and explanation. This includes orally setting tasks, giving assignments, discussing resources, reviewing progress, and any other activity requiring aural comprehension and processing.

- Tactile Learners are those prefer to learn hand-on. For these students, teachers should have manipulative and three-dimensional materials that are touchable and moveable. They should make use of models and other real objects. Students should be allowed to plan,

demonstrate report, and evaluate by using these types of resources and the teacher should encourage written, graphic or computer records of information.

- Kinesthetic Learners like experiential learning, preferring physical activities such as field trips, role-play and drama.

- Individual Learners like to work alone, and prefer self-directed study, independent reading computer work.

- Group learners like group interaction: they prefer games, role-play, and other social activities.

For Personality Styles, there are Tolerance of Ambiguity style and Right and Left Hemisphere Dominance.

- Ambiguity tolerance learners refer more content than others to entertain and even internalize contradictory propositions do. Others, more closed-minded and dogmatic, tend to reject items that are contradictory with their existing system. In their ambiguity intolerance is limited a number of innovative and creative possibilities. The students of this type refer to how comfortable a learner is with uncertainty. Some students do well in situations where they are several possible answers. Others prefer one correct answer.

- Left and Right Brain Dominance styles: students who are left-brain dominated are intellectual; they process information in a linear way, tend to be objective, prefer established, certain information and rely on language in thinking and remembering. Those who are right-brain dominated are differently intuitive, process information in a holistic way, tend to be subjective, prefer elusive, uncertain information and rely on drawing and manipulating to help them think and learn.

## **2.2. Learning styles in developing listening skill**

### ***2.2.1. Listening strategies and learning styles***

The students in a class will have different learning styles. Some styles will work better than others in different learning situations, but no single learning style is better than another one. Students find learning easier if the learning material matches their learning styles (Ehrman & Leaver, 2003; Chang, 2005). As English language teachers, it is important that they understand the learning styles of their students and value all styles equally. One way the teachers can show that they value all learning styles in their lesson plan that is they have to include activities that address the different learning styles.

Learners will learn more efficiently if the materials are suitable for their learning styles. If they face some materials which are not consistent with their learning styles, they would feel bored and inattentive in classrooms, not perform well on tests, get discouraged about the course, and conclude that they are not good at the subject of the course and stop learning (Oxford et al., 1991). When there is a mismatch between learners' preferred learning styles and the learning materials, students may develop learning strategies to cope with materials which are not initially compatible.

Since learning styles are considered to be innate to individuals, they certainly affect their

learning processes, including learning a second language. For that reason, there may also be a significant difference in the strategies used by effective and ineffective EFL learners. Effective EFL learners, generally speaking, use more listening strategies than do ineffective EFL learners.

Flowerdew and Miller (2005) claim that effective listening learners use both top-down and bottom-up approaches, whereas ineffective listening learners use only bottom-up approaches. However, Tsui and Fullilove (1998) argue that the subjects performed better in listening tests when they use more bottom-up approaches. In terms of learning styles and listening strategies, analytical learners favour bottom-up processes as they tend to focus on detailed information and intuitive learners favour top-down processes as they tend to obtain global information first. This may also apply to listening strategies used by EFL learners with different learning styles as analytical learners prefer listening strategies that focus on detailed and basic information and intuitive learners prefer to use listening strategies which can help them grasp information as a whole (Messick, 1984).

Strategies associated with listening skills have been divided into three groups: meta-cognitive (paying attention and self-monitoring), cognitive (taking notes and summarizing), and socio- affective listening strategies (using laughter and taking risks wisely and working with peers) (Oxford, 1990). Regarding these listening strategies, a few researchers such as Ahmadi and Yamini (2003) aim to explore the relationship between field-dependence/field-independence and the use of listening comprehension strategies. They find out the correlation of meta-cognitive, memory, cognitive and social strategies which were significantly related to the cognitive style, whereas affective and compensatory strategies do not show a significant correlation.

### ***2.2.2. The benefits of identifying learning styles in developing listening skill***

Learning styles and preferences vary for each of us and in different situations. By understanding that other people can have quite different learning preferences, a person can learn how to communicate with all messages effectively in a way that many more people can understand. This is fundamentally important, particularly if a person is a professional for whom communication is an important part of his job. Also, in teaching and learning listening, identifying learning styles brings some considerable benefits for both teachers and students.

For teachers, they can achieve some significant benefits from learning styles inventories in teaching listening skill.

First of all, the questionnaire of learning styles inventory informs teachers of the specific learning style needs in their classroom. The teacher knows who is a group learner and can arrange to give those students a special group assignment to enhance their learning. By addressing the learning needs of their class, the teachers can ensure that everyone excels and are able to master any lesson. Then, identifying learning styles of the students can help teachers design appropriate activities for the students so that their needs are catered to effectively in the classroom. Next, understanding students' learning styles help teachers design lessons to address different learning styles in their classes without wasting time. When the teachers master their students' learning styles, they know what listening activities are appropriate to them to design lessons quickly. Finally, teachers can prefer learning styles of the students to adopt a multi-style



teaching approach when planning for each listening lesson with the learning style-based activities. The teacher can observe whether every student is enthusiastic about listening tapes or not in teaching listening process to adjust teaching methods properly.

For learners, they can benefit so much in their learning listening by understanding their learning styles.

To begin with, it is advantageous for students to understand their type of learning style early on so that homework and learning may become easier and less stressful. Secondly, the students can maximize their learning potential and developing the listening skill as much as possible if they understand their personal learning styles. Understanding learning styles help the students learn in a variety of ways, the students can make the most of their learning abilities. Thirdly, the students can exploit their learning styles for various learning situations. It also explains how students can use the knowledge of their preferred learning styles to enhance their learning in the English listening and other subjects to adapt to various teaching styles of teachers. Fourthly, students learn better and more quickly if the teaching methods used match their preferred learning styles. Because the students are better able to learn and gather information, they will make better decisions and choose better learning ways. Finally, the student-teacher relationship can improve because the student is more successful and is more interested in learning.

To achieve the benefits as much as possible, the teachers should take time to identify how their students prefer to learn and then force themselves to break out of their comfort zone. Once a student starts learning in new ways, he will be amazed at how much more he catch and how much easier it is to assimilate information and make sense of what is going on.

### ***2.2.3. Some difficulties in teaching listening skill in Vietnam***

There has undoubtedly been some interesting and stimulating work that has originated from the research on learning styles, both in whole school contexts and in term of research into teaching English listening effectively. However, there is a little independent empirical research which supports the wide-ranging claims made by protagonists of accelerated learning of the students. Both teachers and students have some difficulties in developing listening at high schools.

To start with, there has been some negative feedback from the teachers who have used a new series of English textbooks for students at Vietnam high schools for some recent years. Many teachers stated that the new textbooks that contain a large amount of knowledge hinder the students' learning.

Next, one of the problems the teachers face is that they are not satisfied with their way of teaching students to listen. Although they have been trying to find ways to make their listening activities more effective, the results they obtain were not as good as what they had hoped.

Then, some teachers think that the problems of teaching listening come from the teaching methods in the listening classes. If they teach in a class with many weak students, they will lack time to develop English listening skill for all students effectively. They also cannot fully implement all of the activities in their lesson plans.

Finally, the teachers think that many students with poor vocabulary, weak grammar and bad pronunciation will also reduce the classroom potential learning environment. It may be because of their laziness or learning conditions at their age.

Although there are some difficulties in teaching listening and carrying out this research, I believe in the authenticity of this research. It is essential that it provides significant insight into how to develop students' listening skill effectively. Besides, this research also brings some advantages that help students feel confident in communicative activities in the classroom and daily life.

### **3. Methods and Materials**

In order to answer the research questions mentioned above, the instruments used to obtain data were questionnaire, observation, and interview.

#### **3.1. Questionnaire**

Questionnaire No.1 was distributed to 90 participants. The questions in this questionnaire focused on identifying types of learning styles of eleventh graders and provide the teacher-research with a formal tool to design listening activities.

Questionnaire No. 2 was distributed to 90 participants at the end of research procedure, after the students have worked with learning style-based activities in listening classes. The purpose of this questionnaire was to obtain students' feedbacks on identifying their learning styles in developing listening skills. The questionnaire includes a mixture of close and open-ended questions.

Questionnaire No. 3 was delivered to the teachers. This questionnaire was to obtain teachers' feedback on their listening teaching methods.

#### **3.2. Interview**

In-depth individual interviews, including 10 open-ended questions were scheduled and conducted with 10 English teachers in English classes at Quoc Hoc High school. These questions are related to methods of teaching listening skill based on learning styles of the students. The interview for each teacher was about 30 minutes and was recorded on the recording equipment of the interviewer.

#### **3.3. Class observation**

The class observation was carried out in three English classes at Quoc Hoc high school. All the class observations aimed at testing and cross-checking the reliability and the validity of the information collected from the questionnaires. Every observation was facilitated with the help of an observation sheet. On the observation sheet, the teachers should say what they like and dislike about the lesson and some suggestion to make the lesson better next time.

#### **3.4. Data analysis methods**

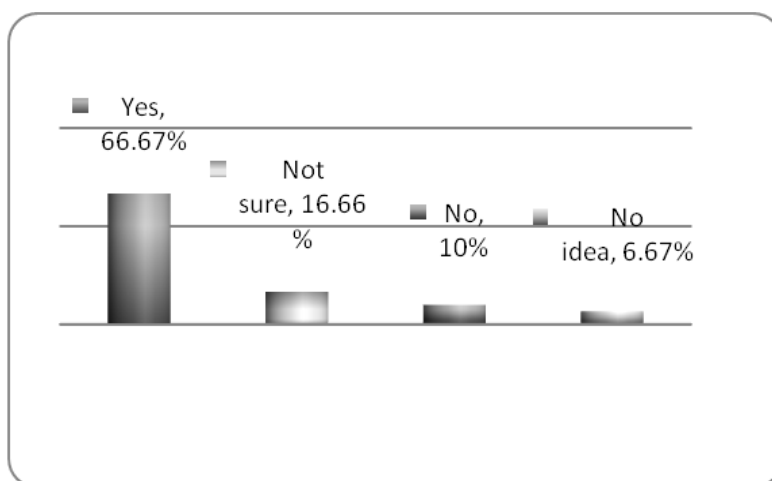
When the data collection process was completed, the returned questionnaires for students and teachers, the interview recordings and observation sheets were carefully examined by the researcher. The collected data were analyzed and discussed by means of Tables and Figures.

The analysis of the data gathered from the questionnaire and interviews have helped the researcher identify students’ responses to their teachers’ performance.

**4. Findings**

**4.1. A comparison between students with and without learning style-based practices**

“Do you think students with learning style-based practices learn better than students without them?” was the question that the researcher raised to students in order to know what they think and make a comparison between learners with learning style-based practices and those without learning style-based practices (you cannot compare at this stage, because this is only what students think. The responses to this question are shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** A comparison of the responses by students with and without learning style-based practices

**4.2. Benefits that teachers achieve from identifying learning styles in teaching listening skill**

**Table 2.** Benefits that the teacher achieves from identifying learning styles

Opinions	Number of respondents (No./10)	Percentage (%)
a. Expose students to different types of listening to catch specifics or to understand a text	9	90
b. Teach a variety of listening tasks and strategies in order to develop students’ motivation in learning listening	9	90
c. Design instructions and materials that respond directly to individual learning needs and learning preferences	8	80
d. Develop the awareness of the students in listening process	6	60
e. Gain insight of students’ strengths and weaknesses	4	40

There was no special distinction between the data from the questionnaires as demonstrated above and the data of the same category from the interviews. However, it was in the interviews that some interesting facts were revealed. For example, one teacher admitted that *“identifying students’ learning styles aims at teaching listening with different methods that can bring some advantages to enrich my lesson plans and to lighten the learning atmosphere”*. For some other teachers, it was just *“to make my lesson plans not so boring and repetitive”*. To some extent, they did not focus on many other things such as the students’ attitude and motivation in learning or their acquisition of the new knowledge and listening techniques.

#### 4.3. Benefits that students achieve from identifying learning styles in developing listening skills

This multiple question was designed to look for students’ opinions on the benefits of identifying learning styles in learning listening skill. Different perspectives are listed in the table 2 in the order of priorities:

**Table 3.** Benefits students achieve from identifying learning styles

Opinions	Numbers of respondents (No./90)	Percentage (%)
a. Become more motivated and confident of learning listening skill	57	63.33
b. Promote the learning listening quality	55	61.11
c. Identify the learners’ strength and weakness	55	61.11
d. Promote responsibility and independence in listening	52	57.77
e. Encourage feedback during listening process	40	44.44
f. Increase the score in listening skill	32	35.55
g. Improve interaction in listening classroom	25	27.78
h. Motivate further practicing listening skill at home	22	24.44
i. Improve communicative ability with foreigners	19	21.11

Table 3 also demonstrates that identifying learning styles aimed to motivate further practicing listening skills at home by 24.44% of the respondents and 21.11% of the students answered that their future benefit would be their ability to communicate with foreigners. Through identifying learning styles, students can have a chance to reflect themselves on their learning to see if they are making progress or not. They would understand what they learned in class and employ some good strategies to practice listening at home. In addition, if they learn listening well, they can be confident of communicating with foreigners that they meet. They will be active in the communicative progress.

Identifying learning styles will help students learn English skills more effectively. They will appear to be active, creative and independent in their language learning process. Actually, the benefits from identifying learning styles in developing listening skills are numerous and they depend on each learner’s motivation in their learning.

With this question, the researcher has already understood something about students’ attitudes towards the benefits of identifying learning styles in listening classes. When realizing these benefits, students are likely to pay much attention, make efforts, and work out the best learning strategies.

## 5. Conclusion and Implications

This research paper brings an overall picture of identifying learning styles in developing listening skill by eleventh graders at Quoc Hoc high school. It emphasizes that identifying learning styles were taken into consideration with great efforts from students' attitudes. As shown in the findings, students' learning results from identifying learning styles were much enhanced and potentials were proved positive. However, real identifying learning styles has not been achieved yet, much effort and enthusiasm will be needed to gain this goal.

Although there are some difficulties from teaching listening skill and carrying out this research, the author believe in the authenticity of this research. It is essential that it provides significant insight into how to develop students' listening skill effectively. Besides, this research also brings some advantages that help students feel confident in communicative activities in the classroom and daily life.

From the findings of the study, some implications are made as follows.

### 5.1. For students

From the research, many suggestions were drawn out for students to be successful language learners by means of learning style-based activity practices.

Firstly, the students need to become aware of the ways they learn best, which involves their learning styles and strategies. They have to change their passive learning attitude into a more active attitude, that is, to become less dependent on the teacher and take charge of their own learning. They should be taught to be responsible for their own learning.

Besides, students should help one another in group work activities and outside classrooms to improve their English because cooperative learning is a successful teaching strategy and most suitable for students of different levels of ability.

In order to maximize the advantages and minimize the disadvantages that the identified learning styles bring to the students' language learning process, it is suggested that students should practice learning style-based activities with high frequency. It is clear that the more students practice, the fewer potential disadvantages they will encounter. Students will gain experience when they do extensive learning styles practices.

Furthermore, in order to make learning more meaningful, students have to set the detailed objectives or goals to attain. When students set out the objectives or goals, they are motivated to learn, they will take responsibility for their learning and they will try their best to achieve the objectives or goals.

### 5.2. For teachers

How to practice learning style-based activities successfully requires not only the effort from students, the main subjects of learning listening process, but also the effort from the teachers, as instructors and facilitators, in stimulating students' listening learning process. Identifying learning styles means the ability to orient one's own learning process, and they know how to learn best by themselves. However, teachers play important roles in the success of the learning procedure. Without the help of teachers, students might not achieve any success,

which would bring about negative effects, especially in the circumstance of Vietnam, where identifying learning styles is still a new aspect in foreign language teaching and learning.

The teachers should emphasize the necessity of learning styles in order to improve the quality of listening classes. In addition, the teachers have to develop more global perceptions on the definition of learning style for themselves and for all of their students. The teachers should develop more reliable ways of assessing students' learning styles profiles and improve the current methods of exploring students' learning styles. In addition, the awareness of developing students' growth instead of purely delivering the knowledge is very important for the teacher.

Besides that, the teachers should focus on listening skills and strategies for students. As a result, the students can apply them in listening and make progress. Teachers should redesign tasks in the textbook so that they are more interesting and suitable for students' level.

Teachers can provide students with interesting pre-listening activities such as guessing what is coming, playing a game related to the topic of the listening text or letting students discuss the topic. This will make the class atmosphere warmer and more interesting in order to address to various learning styles of the students and help them to get away from pressure and listen to the text comfortably.

Then, they should define their students' levels, needs, and interests in the early days of the school year, through which, teachers can choose the proper methodologies, techniques and design the appropriate tasks and activities for their own students.

Also, teachers should use grouping strategies properly to promote cooperative learning and effectiveness in peer teaching by arranging mixed-ability pairs and groups. In addition, teachers should save more time to design more activities and teaching aids to give support to students' understanding in multilevel classes.

Teachers may take measures to encourage weak students' participation in group and to further advanced students' progresses. Last but not least, teachers should apply more proper techniques to make classroom management really effective. If teachers can ensure that they do not leave weak students behind or make advanced students feel bored with easy tasks, they can overcome the difficulties in teaching multilevel classes to some extent.

Teaching students with diverse learning style-based activities is carried out with different frequency and diversity of teaching listening aids in different high schools. In some schools, there are not regular schedules for the learning style-based activities among listening classes. Hence, organizing a stable schedule for teaching listening skill with diverse listening aids is of great importance.

One of the most vital tasks requiring strong students' participation is assignment. Like the use of the listening tapes in the textbook, the effective use of the assignment that is suitable for students' learning styles helps them be motivated in listening learning process. The most serious limitation of this research is that it has been conducted on a small scale and within limited time of implementation. Therefore, similar research on larger scales with larger numbers of teachers and students should be implemented to achieve more convincing conclusions.

The research which focuses on investigating the using of learning style dimensions and activities along with various listening strategies are considered to be vital in listening comprehension.

Furthermore, it is suggested that further studies should be done to subjects of not only listening skill but also writing, speaking and reading skills in order to have an overview of students' preferences and design supplemental learning style based – activities in developing these skills for students in English classes.

## References

- Brown, H. D. (2006). *Principles of language learning and teaching* (4<sup>th</sup> edition.). New York: Longman.
- Djiwandono, P. I. (2006). Cooperative listening as a mean to promote strategic listening comprehension. *English Teaching Forum*, 44 (3), 32. Retrieved on May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2011 from <http://exchanges.state.gov/forum/vols/vol44/no3/p32.htm>
- Dobkin, B. A., & Pace, R. C. (2003). *Communication in a changing world*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Dunn, R. (1990). Rita Dunn answers questions on learning styles. *Educational Leadership*, 48, 15-19.
- Dunn, R., & Dunn, K. (1993). *Teaching secondary students through their individual leaning styles*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Ehrman, M., & Leaver, B. (2003). Cognitive styles in the service of language learning. *System* (31), 393-451.
- Felder, R. M & Silverman L.K. (1988). Learning and teaching styles in engineering education. *Education* 78(7), 674-681.
- Fleming, N. (2001). *Teaching and learning styles: VARK strategies*. Christchurch, New Zealand.
- Flowerdew, J. & Miller, L. (2005). *Second language listening: theory and practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Forseth, R., Forseth, C., Ta, T. H., & Nguyen, V. D. (1994). *Methodology handbook*. America: English language institute.
- Gordon, R. D. (1985). Empathy: the state of the art and science. *International conference of the world communication association*. Bayuio, Philippines.
- Guild, P. B., & S. Garger. (1985). *Marching to different drummers*. Alexandria, VA: Association of supervision and curriculum development.
- Harmer, J. (1998). How to teach English. *How to teach listening* (pp. 97-111). Great Britain: Longman.
- Howatt, A., & J. Dakin. (1974). *Language laboratory materials*. In J. P. B. Allen, S. P. B. Allen, & S. P. Corder Eds.). Boston: Heinle & Heinle.
- Keefe, J. W. (1998). *Profiling and utilizing learning style. NASSP learning style series*. Reston VA: National association of secondary school principals.
- Oxford, R.L., (1990). *Language learning strategies: What every teacher should know*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle.
- Oxford, R., et all (1991). *Style wars: teacher-student style conflicts in the language classroom*. In S.Magnan (Ed.), *Challenges in the 1990's for college foreign language programs*. Boston: Heinle and Heinle.
- O'Malley, M. J., & Chamot, A. U. (1990). *Learning strategies in second language acquisition*. England: Cambridge University Press.
- Reid, J. (1995). *Learning styles in the ESL/EFL classroom*. Boston, MA: Heinle and Heinle Publishers.
- Reiff, J. (1992). *What research says to the teacher: learning styles*. Washington, DC: National

Education Association.

Richard, J., & Rockchart, C. (1996). *Reflective teaching in second language classrooms* (pp.33-145). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Ross, J. (2006). ESL listening comprehension: Practical guidelines for teachers. *The Internet TESL Journal*, 7(2). Retrieved on May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2008 from <http://iteslj.org>

Rost, M. (1994). *Introducing listening*. Great Britain: Penguin Books Lts

Rost, M. (2002). *Teaching and researching listening*. London, UK: Longman.

Skehan, P. (1991). Individual differences in second language learning. *Studies in second language acquisition*, 13, 275-298.

Smith, L.H., & Renzulli, J.S. (1984). *Learning style preferences: a practical approach for classroom teachers. Theory into Practice*, 23(1), 44-50.

Thomlison, T. D. (1984). *Relational listening: theoretical and practical considerations*. Annual meeting of the 5<sup>th</sup> international listening association.

Tsui, A.B.M. and Fullilove, J. (1998). Bottom-up or top-down processing as a discriminator of L2 listening performance. *Applied Linguistics*, 19(4), 432-451.

Vandergrift, L. (1997). The strategies of second language (French) listeners. *Foreign Language Annals*, 30, 387-409.

## NHẬN BIẾT PHONG CÁCH HỌC CỦA HỌC SINH LỚP 11 ĐỂ PHÁT TRIỂN KỸ NĂNG NGHE TẠI TRƯỜNG QUỐC HỌC

**Tóm tắt:** Đề tài “Nhận biết phong cách học của học sinh lớp 11 để phát triển kỹ năng nghe tại trường Quốc Học” được thực hiện nhằm cung cấp tính hiệu quả của việc dạy và học kỹ năng nghe cho học sinh lớp 11. Phương pháp nghiên cứu định tính và định lượng được sử dụng trong bài nghiên cứu này nhằm phân tích các quan sát, phỏng vấn và các câu hỏi từ 90 học sinh lớp 11 và 10 giáo viên tiếng Anh trường Quốc Học, nhằm nhận biết các khía cạnh liên quan đến dạy và học nghe. Kết quả nghiên cứu bao gồm: (1) Phong cách học ảnh hưởng đến kết quả học nghe; (2): Nhận biết phong cách học mang lại những lợi ích đáng kể trong việc dạy và học nghe.

**Từ khóa:** các lợi ích, kỹ năng nghe, nhận biết, phong cách học