Language Learning Styles of Students at the People’s Police College II

Nguyen Thi Trang 1*

1 Lac Hong University, Dong Nai, Vietnam
1 The People’s Police College II, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
* Corresponding author’s Email: phamnguyen208@gmail.com
* https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4861-2092
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ABSTRACT

This paper presents the results of an investigation into the language learning styles of students at the People’s Police College II. The participants in this study consisted of 105 students (male = 96 and female = 9) who are studying at the People’s Police College II. They all are first-year students. Subjects completed some types of questionnaires, that was a background questionnaire used to collect the students’ information, Joy Reid’s Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire (PLSPQ) in their formal classes. The research finding displayed three learning style preferences used by the first-year students at the People’s Police College II, namely auditory, group, and visual learning styles. From the survey results, the author found that teachers’ teaching methods should also vary accordingly. If teachers know students’ preferred learning styles, they will design appropriate activities for their students; moreover, if the students understand their personal learning styles, they may heighten their learning ability and adapt their learning preferences to different teaching situations.

Keywords: auditory learning style, group learning style, visual learning style, kinesthetic learning style, tactile learning style, individual learning style

Introduction

Nobody can deny the importance of choosing appropriate teaching methods that are by the student's language learning styles. According to research, learning styles are an individual's natural, habitual, and preferred ways of absorbing, processing, and storing new knowledge and abilities, which takes into account mental, physiological, and affective components (Reid, 1995). While learning strategies are particular actions chosen by the learner to increase learning effectiveness, learning styles represent unconsciously held individual learner features. In contrast to learning strategies, which are external abilities frequently utilized consciously by students to support their learning, Reid (1998) proposed that learning styles are inwardly based features that are frequently not noticed or used by learners. Learning styles are more consistent traits that students bring to learning circumstances compared to learning tactics. Indeed, there are many researchers researching students’ learning styles; they have brought in several findings and conclusions that teachers of language can’t help take into account when designing and presenting a lecture in the classroom since the teaching and learning cycle heavily relies on
learning styles. Teachers will identify students' learning styles and make an effort to accommodate them if they are aware of the various learning preferences of their students.

Being a teacher of English, the author learns that not every single student is interested in the same teaching method or classroom tasks; thus, to activate or encourage our students to attentively take part in our lectures, we never disregard our students’ learning preferences. Not to say the least, before we start to teach a class, we often conduct a survey to collect data on students’ learning styles, which enables us to design appropriate activities for our students so that their needs and learning are catered to effectively in the classroom. Once students understand their personal learning styles, they may heighten their learning ability and adapt their learning preferences to different teaching situations. Moreover, in my teaching process, we noticed that not every student is interested in the teaching method of teachers, and not all students understand how appropriate learning styles are to get good results in their foreign language learning process. In addition to students who are aware and clearly define their own language learning styles, there are still some students who are barely aware of their language learning styles. This is also a major difficulty and obstacle affecting the teachers’ English teaching approaches in our school. So, the author’s purpose in this paper was to find out the language learning styles of students in learning the English process in our school and which language learning styles are most preferred for them. When the teachers know the students’ language learning styles, they can change the teaching strategies and control the classroom better. From these results, the teachers can design appropriate activities for my students so that their needs and learning are catered to effectively in the classroom. In addition, this study’s results also help students be aware of their favorite learning styles in the learning English process and understand their Learning English from their teachers. They can therefore improve their English skills by using their own language learning strategies, which are based on their learning preferences, as a learning guide.

In this study, the author would like to present the study of students' language learning styles at the People’s Police College II where the author is working in Vietnam. For my research, the author employed Joy Reid's PLSPQ (Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire).

Literature review

There are two sections in this part. The first section begins with a definition of the terms used, such as learning and learning styles. The second section is about previous studies.

Definitions of Learning

According to Brown (2007), learning is the process of gathering information or mastering a skill through study, instruction, or practice.

According to Larkin and Budny (2005), learning styles are a set of personal traits imposed by biology and development that determine whether or not a student will benefit from a certain teaching or learning approach.

According to Brockett & Roger (1994), learning is something that each person does on their own to maximize their potential.
Learning is the process of continuous improvement in a person's ability or performance potential. It must emerge through the learner's interactions and experiences with the learning environment, according to Driscoll (2000).

**Definitions of Learning Style**

An important part of a student's learning course is their choice of learning styles. To apply the hypothesis of learning styles to English learning and teaching in schools, one must first understand the nature of learning. So, what are the students’ learning styles? There are numerous ways to define learning styles, including the following:

According to Reid (1987), students’ learning styles are defined as: a word that describes the differences between learners' uses of one or more senses to comprehend, arrange and retain experience.

Based on Nunan’s definition (1991), any individual's chosen learning method is referred to as their learning style. (p. 168)

According to Keefe (1979), learning preferences are mental, emotional, and physical characteristics that are typically reliable indicators of how students experience, engage with, and react to the learning environment. (p.4).

According to Dun et al. (1989, cited in Clinton - 2002), one aspect of learning styles is motivation, responsibility (conformity), and a need for structure. Other elements include individual responses to sound, light, temperature, design, perception, intake, chronological highs and lows, mobility needs, and persistence (p. 56).

**Learning Styles Models**

To assess each person's learning style, a variety of learning style models and tests have been created by researchers, including the ones below:

David Kolb's learning style model categorizes students into four groups: diverger, assimilator, converger, and accommodator (Kolb, 1984). His methodology and instrument are largely geared toward adult learners. The idea of experiential learning is explored in this paradigm as it looks at how learning is always cyclical, going from experience to reflection to conceptualization to action to additional experience.

According to Dunn and Dunn (1989), the five domains of environmental, emotive, social, physiological, and psychological learning styles were given much weight. Each of these categories had 21 elements.

There are four types of learning styles (sensing-intuitive, visual-verbal, active-reflective, sequential-global) identified by Felder and Silverman (1988).

Reid (1995) created a model for learning style based on the senses that students use to learn most effectively: auditory, kinesthetic, visual, and tactile preferences, as well as two social learning components: individual and group preferences. To find out which method of learning a second language students prefer, the author of the current study used Reid's Perceptual Learning Style Preference model (PLSPQ).

**Model of the perceptual learning style preference**

The Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire (PLSPQ), designed by Reid (1995), is
an evaluation tool and model of learning styles that are intended for language learners. It is based on the three ways that students learn best: visually, auditorily, and kinesthetically, as well as two social components of learning: group and individual interests.

**Perceptual learning styles**

**Visual learners**

Visual learners are those that prefer to convey their ideas and concepts via the use of images, graphics, colors, and maps. For those who learn visually, the information must be visible clearly, or the teachers use color, tone, and brightness to help them remember information faster. In another way, visual learners can interpret information successfully utilizing graphs, charts, maps, diagrams, and other visual pictures.

**Auditory learners**

Auditory learners are those who learn best by listening to others speak and taking in verbal lectures, discussions, group projects, and conversations. Learners remember information based on how it sounds, and spoken instructions are simpler to comprehend for them than written ones. They gain knowledge through hearing and interpreting knowledge by paying attention to the pitch, voice, emphasis, and pace. They are weak in reading material written down, which is a weakness.

**Kinesthetic learners**

Learning through "hands-on" experiences works best for kinesthetic learners. Those who learn kinesthetically move their bodies and engage with their surroundings. Kinesthetic learners enjoy engaging in physical activity and interaction. They are, therefore, quite active, and it could be difficult for them to spend a lot of class time sitting still. They suggest complete physical immersion in a learning setting, such as field trips, acting out, pantomiming, or conducting interviews. They enjoy moving around and using their index fingers when reading a book to recall information.

**Social learning styles**

**Group learning style:** Students prefer to study in groups or in social settings.

**Individual learning style:** Students favor studying independently and reading for themselves.

**Previous studies**

Numerous authors have carried out studies on how students learn languages. One example is Gilakjani (2012) from the Islamic Azad University's English Language Department; in Lahijan, Iran. He looked studied the preferred learning styles of 100 students in his university. All of the students studied in major English translation in Language Translation Department. Participants range in age from 23 to 28 and include 40 men and 60 women. The study aimed to determine which of the three learning styles- visual, auditory, and kinesthetic - was favored. The survey tool utilized in this investigation was the PLSPQ, which Reid (1987) created. From the results of his survey, 50 percent of students chose the visual style, followed by 35 percent who liked the auditory style and 15 percent who selected the kinesthetic style. According to the results of the earlier research, it may be said that Azad University of Lahijan, Iran's EFL students who were majoring in English translation preferred visual learning styles and achieved the highest
academic results in their field of study.

In a different study, medical students at an Indian institution participated in Kharb, Samanta, Jindal, and Singh’s (2013) research. One hundred eighty people all participated, and these students were from the first and seventh periods. Participants completed the Visual, Auditory, Read-Write, and Kinesthetic (VARK) inventory to determine their preferred learning style. The findings showed that students in the first semester preferred auditory education, whereas students in the seventh period chose kinesthetic instruction. According to their gender, female students preferred the auditory style of learning over the kinesthetic mode during both periods.

Mohammed Ashour Jhaish’s (2010) other study focused on the connections between Al-Aqsa University English major students' academic performance and their language learning approaches, learning preferences, and methods. Two questionnaires were given to a total of 60 students to complete this investigation. The first was used to ascertain students' preferences for perceptual learning styles, while the second was used to ascertain students' learning methods. According to the findings of the survey, the results for tactile learning are 20.567 (82.27 percent), and the scores for kinesthetic learning are 22.567 (90.27 percent). These scores fall into the major learning style preferences group. Third place went to the group style, which had a percent weight of 79.80. The visual style, which had a percent weight of 78.80, came in fourth. With a percent weight of 78.60, the auditory learning style came in fifth. With a percent weight of 54.73, the preferences category placed individual style in sixth place.

The findings of another research, such as Li and Qin (2006), done with second-year students with 94 males and 93 females in China, also demonstrated that their learning styles significantly influenced the usage of learning strategies by students. According to this investigation, they concluded that students' interactions with different teaching strategies might affect their ability to learn a language. They advise teachers to incorporate learning styles into the teaching of learning strategies as a result. The body of research demonstrates that there is an inconsistency between various studies about the relationship and strength between learning styles and learning strategies.

As we know, many authors have conducted studies dealing with learning tactics and styles of students in their schools around the world, but until this day, has not been any studies about this at the People's Police College II, where the author is working. Being a teacher of English, we just surveyed 105 first-year students (male = 96 and female = 9) who are studying at the People’s Police College II about their English learning styles through survey questions, and the results showed that not every single student is interested in the teaching method of English teachers and not all of the students understand how appropriate learning styles and strategies are to get good results in their foreign language learning process. In addition to students who are aware and clearly define their own English learning styles, there are still some students who are barely aware of their learning. Thus, this is also a major difficulty and obstacle affecting the teachers' English teaching approaches in our school. This study aimed to identify students' preferred learning styles in learning the English process in our school and which learning styles are most preferred for them. From these results, the teachers can design appropriate activities for my students so that their needs and learning are catered to effectively in the classroom.
With all the above in mind, this study directs to respond to the research questions:

1. What are the learning styles of students in an English class at the People’s Police College II?
2. What are the differences among students’ learning styles at the People’s Police College II?

Methods

Research site
The study was conducted at the People's Police College II, which is located at No. 200 Nguyen Van Tang Street, Thu Duc city, Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam.

Population and sampling methods
The participants in this study consisted of 105 students (male = 96 and female = 9) who are studying at the People’s Police College II. They all are first-year students. All participants took part in the questionnaires by the researcher. In terms of previous exposure to language, all the students had studied English for six years during high school. Their ages ranged from 18 to 35.

Table 1: Participants in this study

| INFORMATION       | NUMBER | PERCENTAGE |
|-------------------|--------|------------|
| Gender            |        |            |
| Male              | 96     | 91.4%      |
| Female            | 9      | 8.6%       |
| Age               |        |            |
| 18-23             | 16     | 15.2%      |
| 24-29             | 67     | 63.8%      |
| 30-35             | 22     | 21.0%      |
| Job               |        |            |
| High school       | 11     | 10.5%      |
| Students          |        |            |
| Conscripts        | 94     | 89.5%      |
| Years of learning |        |            |
| >1                | 98     | 93.3%      |
| <1                | 7      | 6.7%       |

Research design and instrument

Reid has specifically created a learning style model, and assessment tool called the Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire (PLSPQ) for language learners. It is based on how students learn best using their perceptions, including their preferences for the visual, auditory, and kinesthetic arts, as well as two social aspects of learning, such as group and individual preferences.

To collect data in the study, the author used Joy Reid’s PLSPQ was given to the students before joining our school's new course. A background questionnaire was used to collect the students' information, such as age, gender, job, and years of learning English. This tool includes 30 items that measure the students' preferred learning styles depending on how they prefer to study utilizing their senses (visual Learning, aural Learning, kinesthetic Learning, and tactile Learning) and social preferences (group and individual; Shen, 2010).
The procedure of data collection

We surveyed in July 2022 at the Foreign Language Department of the People’s Police College II. A total of 105 students completed questionnaires, which was a background questionnaire used to collect the students' information, PLSPQ, in their formal classes. The thirty items on this questionnaire correspond to the six learning preferences that are visual, auditory, kinesthetic, tactile, group, and individual. Each learning type category's five items were distributed at random. Visual style includes items 6, 10, 12, 24, and 29, while auditory style includes items 1, 7, 9, 17, and 20, kinesthetic style includes items 2, 8, 15, 19, and 26, tactile style includes items 11, 14, 16, 22, and 25, group style includes items 3, 4, 5, 21, and 23, individual style includes items 13, 18, 27, 28 and 30.

Right after delivering the questionnaires, the author required them to read all of the items to see if they had any difficulties understanding them. Then the author thoroughly explained and showed them how to choose the items easily and accurately. The questionnaires would be submitted one week later. When they returned the questionnaires to us, then we checked the answered items carefully to see if they were fulfilled.

Data analysis

After the data were collected, the following procedures were taken in data analysis: First, using the specified formula, the author counted the number of each item and calculated the results of each questionnaire. Because the first questionnaire's items were poorly structured, the authors categorized each into six large categories of learning styles to examine the data it yielded. The highest average figure was used as a representation of the learner's most preferred learning style once they had been determined. This would be the kind of learning style that the participant employed. The quantitative was described and debated after it was finished.

Results/Findings and discussion

The author divided the items into six categories; each category was displayed on a table (Joy Reid). After analyzing the responses of the students we got from the questionnaire, we could realize the students’ learning styles are as follows:

Table 1.1 – Auditory Learning Style

| Total student | Item | Strongly Agree (SD) | Agree (A) | Disagree (DA) | Strongly Disagree (SD) |
|---------------|------|---------------------|-----------|---------------|-----------------------|
| 105           | 1    | 86 (81,90%)         | 0 (0%)    | 0 (0%)        | 0 (0%)                |
| 105           | 7    | 70 (66,67%)         | 0 (0%)    | 0 (0%)        | 0 (0%)                |
| 105           | 9    | 68 (64,76%)         | 0 (0%)    | 0 (0%)        | 0 (0%)                |
| 105           | 17   | 65 (61,90%)         | 0 (0%)    | 0 (0%)        | 0 (0%)                |
| 105           | 20   | 63 (60,00%)         | 0 (0%)    | 0 (0%)        | 0 (0%)                |

After distributing the PLSPQ questionnaire to the participants, the student's learning style preferences were identified. It is clear from the table that the majority of students prefer the
auditory learning mode, as shown in Table 1.1 (ratings from 60 to 81.90 percent), as evidenced by the replies displayed in the summary result table above. A total of 105 students returned the questionnaire sheet, of which 86 students chose the auditory learning style, of which the highest scored statement was item 1 with the highest rating of 81.90 percent. "When the teacher tells me the instructions, I understand better." Meanwhile, the lowest scored statement in the group of auditory styles was item 20, "I learn better in class when I listen to someone”, with a rating of 60 percent.

**Table 1.2 - Group Learning Style**

| GROUP LEARNING STYLE | Total student | Item | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|----------------------|---------------|------|----------------|-------|----------|------------------|
|                      |               |      | (SD)           | (A)   | (DA)     | (SD)            |
| 105                  | 3             | 42   | (40.00%)       | 0     | 0        | 0               |
| 105                  | 4             | 0    | (0%)           | 40    | 0        | 0               |
| 105                  | 5             | 32   | (30.47%)       | 32    | 0        | 0               |
| 105                  | 21            | 26   | (24.76%)       | 0     | 0        | 0               |
| 105                  | 23            | 0    | (0%)           | 25    | 0        | 0               |

The second learning style favored by the students was the group style, as shown in Table 1.2. In this learning style, it can be seen from the table that the rating is from 23.81 percent to 40 percent. Of 105 students, 42 (40 percent) preferred to use group styles in their learning, of which the highest scored statement was item 3, "I get more work done when I work with others". Meanwhile, the lowest scored statement in the group of group learning styles was item 23, "I prefer to study with others", with a rating of 23.81 percent.

**Table 1.3 - Visual Learning Style**

| VISUAL LEARNING STYLE | Total student | Item | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|-----------------------|---------------|------|----------------|-------|----------|------------------|
|                       |               |      | (SD)           | (A)   | (DA)     | (SD)            |
| 105                   | 6             | 31   | (29.52%)       | 0     | 0        | 0               |
| 105                   | 1             | 0    | (0%)           | 28    | 0        | 0               |
| 105                   | 12            | 0    | (0%)           | 26    | 0        | 0               |
| 105                   | 24            | 25   | (23.81%)       | 0     | 0        | 0               |
| 105                   | 29            | 0    | (0%)           | 23    | 0        | 0               |

The third learning style favored by the students was the visual style, as shown in Table 1.3. In this learning style, it can be seen that the rating is from 21.90 percent to 29.52 percent. Of 105 students, 31 (29.52 percent) preferred to use the visual style in their learning, of which the highest scored statement was item 6, "I learn better by reading what the teacher writes on the chalkboard". Meanwhile, the lowest scored statement in the group of visual style was item 29 "I learn more by reading textbooks than by listening to lectures", with a rating of 21.90 percent. Finally, none of them chose individual, tactile, and kinesthetic learning styles. None of them chose individual, tactile, and kinesthetic learning styles.
Discussion

The research finding displayed three learning style preferences used by the first-year students at the People's Police College II, namely auditory, group, and visual learning styles. It can be seen from the total number of participants who favor each learning style that the first is the auditory style, which is preferred by the majority of the students (the students strongly agree with ratings from 60 to 81.90 percent), and the next is the group style is group learning style (the students agree with ratings from 23.81 to 40 percent), and the last learning style is visual style (some of the students agree with ratings from 21.90 to 29.52 percent).

The data analysis showed that students most frequently learn with an auditory approach. Instead of working independently or reading the materials, most students listen to the lectures and participate in the conversations. They appreciate having the chance to ask questions about what they have been studying while listening to the classes that have been recorded. No one likes to work independently or on their own. This indicates that they prefer to speak with people or rely greatly on their teachers rather than being creative or learning things on their own. Each person has a unique learning style since it is natural and correlated with personality. The range of learning methods demonstrated how each individual's preferred method of learning was a result of their traditions and culture. While some personality traits can be learned and environment-adapted but not altered, others cannot be changed no matter how hard a person tries (Susilo, 2009). Since learning preferences cannot be changed, it is possible to fully utilize them to develop one's talents by engaging in enjoyable activities. A learner's needs may fluctuate depending on their preferred method of learning. Due to the importance of the ears in this type of learning, auditory learners like listening to the audio, sharing their opinions, participating in discussions, and debating. Because students tend to engage in debate, the auditory learning style may overtake the visual learning style as the most popular learning method.

According to the study results, auditory learners considered having a class discussion. They could voice their ideas, give recommendations, or remark on current events that were relevant to their subject, which was tremendously helpful. DePorter and Hernacki's (2009) study supports the idea that conversation and debate are most beneficial for auditory learners. Their strongest skill is communication; However, they dislike written instructions because they find them confusing. They can recognize the many variations in emphasis, tone, pitch, and voice. But noise can quickly divert their focus, which could cause them to lose their bearings. Students shouldn't be distracted by any noise to establish a conducive learning atmosphere.

Additionally, this study's findings revealed that auditory learners engaged in particular behaviors. Statement number one scored the highest in this learning technique. The remark in item 1 was, "When the teacher explains the directions to me, I comprehend better." The statements clearly show that auditory learners preferred verbal activities. Since students enjoy listening, it makes sense that if the teachers had spoken to them, they would have understood the material better. The idea is relevant since it is based on the idea that auditory learners prefer to listen. Therefore, verbal explanation, discussion, and argument are viable teaching methods. Auditory learners preferred the speakers' verbal explanations or dialogues during lectures. Even if they had to read books for school, they would feel comfortable hearing the explanation. It was very helpful for auditory learners that the teacher provided both written and spoken
instructions. It was included in the lecturer's teaching methodology, allowing them to study in a way that suited their needs.

The second-largest number of participants were drawn to the group learning approach, with scores ranging from 23.81 to 40 percent, with statement item 3 having the highest score of 40 percent "when I collaborate with others, I accomplish more work." According to the study's findings, students prefer group work to solitary work and are more attentive when doing so. Since no student chooses to work alone or do assignments on their own every time one is offered to them, it follows that students will participate in and perform well in group work assignments in the language classroom, provided the teacher is aware of the student's preferred learning techniques. These results are in line with other studies that discovered formative assessment methods and learning preferences are dependent on a learning environment (Huang et al., 2006). Additionally, applications of instructional web-based technology may provide ways to more consistently accommodate students' learning preferences in higher education (Johnson, 2007).

The last learning style favored by the students was the visual style. The ratings range from 21.90 to 29.52 percent for this learning approach, with statement item 6, “I learn better by reading what the teacher writes on the chalkboard," receiving the highest score. It indicates that the participants like learning through visual mediums, including images, films, presentations, and periodicals. They read for however long they need to and are eager to follow instructions. The visual learning method may become the most common type, given that everything in modern society is made to make people's life simpler and more valuable.

DePorter and Hernacki (2009) assert that visual learners are especially sensitive to colors, images, and videos because they love seeing the stuff they are learning to retain it more readily. Students who struggle with vision want to take detailed notes as their teacher goes over the material. This is because they have trouble listening to verbal instructions and instead like writing down information they can read later. For the study's participants, visions are crucial because they can be used to gauge how well they understand the study's content. They can apply what they have learned and assimilate information more effectively. Item 6 also received the highest score in this learning method. The response in item 6 that obtained the highest score, "I learn better by reading what the teacher writes on the chalkboard," shows that visual learners preferred reading over listening to others. As shown by the fact that it received the highest score of all the statements describing visual activities, visual learners in this study frequently engage in this activity during the learning process.

**Conclusion**

The findings of my study indicate that there are different methods that learners utilize to acquire knowledge; as a result, it is crucial for teachers to understand their students' preferred learning methods and to help them understand diverse teaching methodologies. Try to group the various learning preferences of your students as well as account for them in the classroom. It can be claimed that once the students' learning preferences have been identified, teachers should consider the wide range of student preferences while creating lesson plans, resources, take-home assignments, and acting. Because of the variations that exist amongst students from
various racial, age, and gender backgrounds, it is a good idea for teachers to employ a variety of materials in the classroom. Moreover, of course, teachers should show the students the importance of the fact that they have to learn how to adapt to different learning situations.

Research suggests that a variety of factors influence students' learning accomplishments. The learning style is one of these elements. By doing survey research with the PLSPQ questionnaire, I have concluded that it is vital to make students aware of their preferred learning styles. This will encourage the students to participate in the exercises that the teacher designs, and it will also help them get used to the teacher's teaching methods. Understanding one's preferred style of learning is essential, in the opinion of Park (1976), when learning new things. On the contrary, teachers must adapt their instruction methods to their student's learning preferences. According to Reid (1987, 1995), every student has their own learning styles, strengths, and weaknesses. Matching styles with learning styles gives all learners an equal chance in the classroom and builds students' self-awareness, and a mismatch between teaching and learning styles causes learning failure, frustration, and lack of motivation.

To sum up, in my opinion, it can be challenging for teachers to adapt their lessons to the different learning styles of their students. However, it is possible to be more aware of their own teaching style and to accommodate those styles by presenting information in two different favorable ways: Auditory and Visual, because most of the students prefer these two ways. Besides, the teachers should make them the effectiveness in other learning styles, especially in Group mode.

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**Biodata**

Nguyen Thi Trang is an English teacher in the Foreign Language Department at the People’s Police College II, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. She has been teaching English in her school for six years. Her research and teaching interests include Second Language Acquisition (SLA), Pragmatics, and Translation Studies.