



CONFERENCE PROCEEDING

Pre – University Students’ Learning Style for Malaysian University English Test

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ABSTRACT

English is an international language used worldwide and inseparable due to globalization. Realising this, the Ministry of Education has introduced Malaysian University English Test (MUET) to bridge the gap between secondary and tertiary English language needs. MUET examination consists of four language skills and some of these skills become a great challenge for students to pass. Infact, the government has set a minimum MUET band requirement upon entering and graduating in local universities depending on the chosen courses. It is compulsory for students to pass MUET examination with at least Band 3 before entering tertiary education system. However, several studies done discovered that many students were still struggling with this requirement. Hence, Pre-University students are on one of the most thrilling yet challenging journeys to kick start in pursuing their higher education. It is undeniable that each student has his or her own learning style. As such, it is important for students to identify and understand their own individual learning style to excel in this subject. Hence, the purpose of this study is to determine the dominant individual learning style among the semester 1, Pre-University students for MUET in a selected premier secondary school. A survey was conducted using the 3-point Likert scale questionnaire with 33 items to collect data from 31 semester 1, Pre-university respondents. The findings in this study showed that 36.57% of the Pre-University students prefer Self Study, 32.25% prefer Mentor Coaching and 31.18% learn better by Group Study with friends.

Keywords: *Malaysian University English Test, Pre-University students, Self Study, Mentor Coaching, Group Study*

INTRODUCTION

English is an international language used worldwide and inseparable due to globalization (Pardede, 2012). Realising this, the Ministry of Education has introduced Malaysian University English Test (MUET) in 1999 to bridge the gap between secondary and tertiary English language needs, primarily in English language competency. MUET syllabus was then revised in 2021 to be in line with the Common European Framework Reference for Languages (CEFR) to make sure that it is on par with other international English language proficiency tests. Infact, the government has set a minimum MUET band requirement upon entering and graduating in local universities depending on the chosen courses since 2014 (New Straits Time, 2016). Hence, Pre-University students are on one of the most thrilling yet challenging journeys to kick start in pursuing their higher education. Thus, it is important for students to excel in Pre-University courses as a stepping stone to enter the pinnacle of education, that is the university.

It is undeniable that each student learns differently, and prefers a different teaching and learning approach. As such, it is important for students to identify and understand their own individual learning style to excel in this subject. In other words, students would be able to manage their learning better by identifying their own individual learning style. Hence, the purpose of this study is to determine the dominant individual learning style among the semester 1 Pre-University students for MUET in a selected premier secondary school.

Problem Statement

MUET examination consists of four language skills and some of the skills become a great challenge for students to pass. Apparently, it is compulsory for students to pass MUET examination with at least Band 3 before entering tertiary education system. However, many students were found to struggle with this requirement (Harun, Bosro, Palpanadan, Ibrahim, Mohd Sohaimi & Abdul Latif Jannaton, 2021).

A study conducted among the undergraduates from the Faculty of Technical and Vocational Education in Tun Hussein Onn University Malaysia, found that 83% of the respondents were very weak in speaking skills followed by 30% who were weak in writing skills (Harun, Bosro, Palpanadan, Ibrahim, Mohd Sohaimi & Abdul Latif Jannaton, 2021). Hence, it is vital to identify the learners individual learning style to stream for better future in education.

Research Objective

The objective of this study is to determine the dominant individual learning style among the semester 1 Pre-University students for MUET in a selected premier secondary school.

Research Question

The research question for this study is as below:

1. What is the dominant individual learning style among the Pre-University students for MUET in a selected premier secondary school?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Self-study is a learning method where students direct their own studying without the presence of a teacher. One of the advantages of self-studying is students will learn more effectively at their own pace. Through self-study, they can develop their 'wisdom of practice' (Schulman, 2004).

Next, group study or collaborative learning is also one of the preferred style of studying among students. Group study refers to a small group of students consisting around four to five group members discussing about certain topic in a subject. Students who are participating in this group study would be actively engage with the study materials facilitated by the discussion. Group study always includes interaction, collaboration and utilization of the group's competences (Bennet & Dunne, 1992; Galton & Williamson, 1992; Webb & Palincsar, 1996).

In addition, mentor coaching too would aid students to excel in Muet. Mentor coaching is a process that enables learning and development to occur in order to improve students' performance (Parsloe, 1995). Students are able to learn and understand more deeply about a subject content with a guidance of someone that is more knowledgeable than them.

In both group study and mentor coaching, the Pre-University students are able to progress in their Zone of Proximal Development with the assistance and guides of capable peers or more knowledgeable adult. The Zone of Proximal Development is a key construct in Lev Vygotsky’s theory of learning and development (Vygotsky, 1978)

METHODOLOGY

This is a qualitative study comprising 31, semester 1, Pre-university students from a selected premier secondary school in northern Perak. A 3-point Likert scale questionnaire with 33 items were used in this survey. There are 4 sections in this questionnaire. The first section is on Demographic details, second section is on Self Study, third section is on Group Study and the fourth section is on Mentor. This questionnaire was administered by using google form. The data collected were analysed in percentage and presented in graphs.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings in this study showed that 36.57% of the Pre-University students prefer Self Study, 32.25% prefer Mentor Coaching and 31.18% learn better by Group Study with friends as shown in figure 1 below.

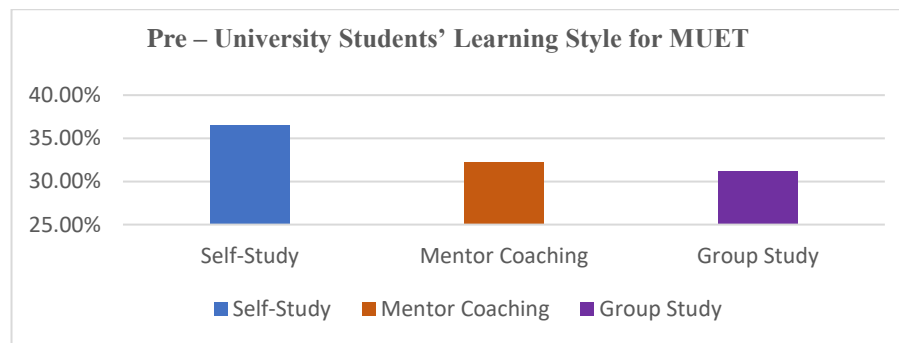


Figure 1. Pre-University Students’ Learning Style for MUET

Self-Study seems to be the dominant individual learning style among the Pre-University students for MUET in this premier secondary school. Thus, this survey discovered that most of the Pre-university students are independent learners due to several reasons as listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Reasons for Self-Study

No	Reasons	Percentage
1	free to choose own study time	7.04%
2	free to own place to learn	6.16%
3	free to choose own clothes while studying	7%
4	free to use online materials according to preference	7.63%
5	free to choose learning materials in YouTube	5.87%
6	free to choose favourite Blogs to assist in learning	4.69%
7	free to choose favourite eBooks in learning	5.58%
8	free to choose favourite articles in online newspapers	4.99%
9	free to choose favourite educational games to assist in learning	5.57%

Mentor coaching seems to be the second favourite learning style among the Pre-University students to scaffold them in learning for MUET. The reasons for these the respondents to prefer mentor coaching is provided in Table 2.

Table 2. Reasons for Mentor Coaching

No	Reasons	Percentage
1	willing to accommodate study time with the timetable set by mentor	3.23%
2	willing to keep up with the learning pace set by the mentor	2.93%
3	willing to wear proper attire for the meetings	7.04%
4	willing to use online learning materials as recommended by mentor	4.99%
5	willing to choose YouTube materials as recommended by mentor	5.57%
6	willing to refer to learning Blogs as recommended by mentor	5.28%
7	willing to refer to eBooks as recommended by mentor	4.7%
8	willing to refer to online newspapers as recommended by mentor	4.99%
9	willing to play educational online games as recommended by mentor to assist in learning	5.28%

Group discussion seems to be less popular compared to Self-Study and Mentor coaching among the Pre-University students due to various minor reasons. These reasons are not willing to compromise in setting time with group members (0.29%), not willing to compromise in choosing favourite Blogs (0.58%), eBooks (0.58%), online newspaper (0.58%) and play online educational games to assist in learning (0.29%).

CONCLUSION

This research brought to light that Self Study is the dominant individual learning style among the Pre-University students to excel in MUET. Identifying and understanding students individual learning style would aid teachers to better tailor their lessons according to students needs and preferences.

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