

**LEARNING STYLE PREFERENCES IN THE
COMPREHENSION OF LITERARY TEXTS**

By

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**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,
in Fulfilment of the Requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

July 2006

Dedication

... to n, f, m & a ...

Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in
fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Chairman: Associate Professor Hj. Rosli Talif, PhD

Faculty: Modern Languages and Communication

The objective of the study was to identify learning styles preferred by learners in a higher learning institution in comprehending literary texts - short stories - in English. It also examined the relationship between several learner factors such as learners' attitude and motivation in reading short stories and learners' learning styles preferences. In addition, this study also examined the effects of specially designed reading lessons (based on Kolb's learning model) on the learners' ability to comprehend literary texts.

The focus of this study was on the improved reading performance demonstrated by a higher score in short stories reading comprehension quizzes. For the purpose of this study, a selection of short stories for upper secondary level selected by a special committee set up by the Ministry of Education, which were suitable for young adults, had been chosen. The decision to use short stories used by the

upper secondary students was deemed appropriate and acceptable since the subjects in the study were in the 16 to 24 years old age group, who share certain similarities as young adults. The short stories used in the study were “*Looking for a Rain God*” by Bessie Head and “*The Drover’s Wife*” by Henry Lawson. “*The Necklace*” by Guy de Maupassant was used as the pre- and post-test reading instruments.

The study employed both quantitative and qualitative approaches to research. This study had two phases of investigations. The first phase involved a survey with questionnaires. The second phase involved conducting a quasi-experiment and interview. After the quasi-experiment had been carried out, there were interviews with selected subjects chosen at random to provide additional information of their experience. The subjects for the survey questionnaires were chosen from students, who were majoring in English literature offered by the Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia. The subjects were not selected randomly as all of them were already in their predetermined classes. These students were categorised as convenience and purposive sampling.

The results of the experiment indicated that the performance of the students who were inclined towards divergent/convergent learning styles in the experimental group was much better in the comprehension quizzes than the students who preferred assimilative/accommodative learning styles. However, the findings of

the study can be applied only to a similar population and setting. The study has to be replicated with a bigger sample population and the experiment has to be carried out with other genres of literature before the findings can be truly generalised to the general population.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**KECENDERUNGAN GAYA BELAJAR DI DALAM
PEMAHAMAN TEKS SASTERA**

Oleh

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Objektif kajian ini adalah untuk mengenal pasti gaya pembelajaran yang diminati oleh mahasiswa di pusat pengajian tinggi dalam memahami teks kesusasteraan - cerpen - Bahasa Inggeris. Kajian ini juga mengkaji hubungan kait antara beberapa faktor pelajar seperti sikap dan motivasi pelajar ketika membaca cerpen dan gaya pembelajaran yang diminati pelajar. Di samping itu, kajian ini juga mengkaji kesan rancangan pengajaran membaca yang dibina khusus (berdasarkan model pembelajaran Kolb) untuk menilai keupayaan mereka memahami cerpen.

Tumpuan kajian ini untuk melihat perubahan terhadap keupayaan membaca melalui peningkatan markah yang lebih tinggi di dalam ujian-ujian pemahaman cerpen. Beberapa cerpen pilihan pengkaji yang sesuai untuk kajian ini adalah merupakan cerpen-cerpen yang telah dipilih oleh jawatankuasa khas Kementerian Pelajaran. Keputusan untuk menggunakan cerpen-cerpen yang diguna pakai oleh pelajar Sekolah Menengah adalah bersesuaian dan wajar kerana subjek kajian terdiri daripada golongan yang berumur di antara 16 dan 24 tahun yang berkongsi

banyak persamaan seperti remaja. Cerpen-cerpen yang digunakan di dalam kajian ini adalah “*Looking for a Rain God*” oleh Bessie Head dan “*The Drover’s Wife*” oleh Henry Lawson. “*The Necklace*” hasil nukilan Guy de Maupassant digunakan sebagai instrumen untuk praujian dan pasca ujian.

Kajian ini menggunakan gabungan corak penyelidikan secara kuantitatif dan kualitatif. Terdapat dua fasa di dalam kajian ini. Fasa pertama melibatkan penggunaan soal selidik. Fasa kedua pula melibatkan quasi-eksperimen dan temu bual. Setelah eksperimen dijalankan, beberapa sesi temu bual dijalankan dengan beberapa subjek yang dipilih secara rawak untuk mendapatkan maklumat tambahan mengenai pengalaman mereka. Subjek untuk kajian ini terdiri daripada mahasiswa yang mengambil major Kesusasteraan Inggeris di Fakulti Bahasa Moden dan Komunikasi, Univerisiti Putra Malaysia. Subjek-subjek ini tidak dipilih secara rawak kerana mereka telah berada di dalam kumpulan yang telah ditetapkan. Mereka ini dikategorikan sebagai *convenience and purposive sampling*.

Keputusan eksperimen menunjukkan bahawa prestasi mahasiswa yang meminati gaya pembelajaran *divergent/convergent* adalah lebih baik dari mahasiswa di dalam kumpulan yang meminati gaya pembelajaran *assimilative/accommodative*. Bagaimanapun, dapatan kajian ini hanya boleh diaplikasikan kepada populasi yang mempunyai latar belakang yang sama. Kajian ini perlu dijalankan pada

skala yang lebih besar dan menggunakan pelbagai genre sebelum boleh diguna pakai secara menyeluruh.

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I certify that an Examination Committee has met on 11th July 2006 to conduct the final examination of Abdul Ghani Haji Abu on his Doctor of Philosophy thesis entitled “Learning Style Preferences in the Comprehension of Literary Texts” in accordance with Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Act 1980 and Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Regulations 1981. The Committee recommends that the candidate be awarded the relevant degree. Members of the Examination Committee are as follows:

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis is based on my original work except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted for any other degree at UPM or other institutions.

ABDUL GHANI HAJI ABU

Date: 3 March 2006

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