Students' Learning Preferences at English Department State Islamic University Sultan Syarif Kasim

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Abstract. The purpose of this study was to identify student's individual learning preferences at English Department State Islamic University Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau. A sample of 28 students was used in this study. The instrument used for data collection is the questionnaire. It is adopted from Brown (1999). The results revealed that although students have dominant learning styles that they use in preference to other learning styles, there are some students who make use of multimodal learning styles. Based on the finding it can be concluded that 88% of students learning preferences is using the internet and 80% of them not prefer to writing paragraph while studying. In conclusion, knowledge of students' learning preferences, recognizing their strengths and weaknesses in learning ad provides the lecturer with valuable information.

Keywords: learning preferences, learning style

INTRODUCTION

In the last many years, the educational system's learning process has grown in importance. Understanding the psychological components of learning facilitates a more in-depth examination of educational systems. The education system in general and learning processes in particular have been further refined as a result of the emphasis placed on identifying the influencing variables in the learning process. According to Heffler (2001) "It is advantageous to know your learning style when approaching a new learning situation to optimize the outcome" and added that awareness of learning styles of the students support the teachers' efforts to organize the course content for better learning to occur. (cited in Pallapu 2008).

Learning preference is one of important aspect in teaching and learning. Learning preferences as a term is generally considered to take in a broader set of factors than just methods as they also take into account aspects that might impact on learning, such as: the environment and where and when students prefer to do their learning. When learners are taught using a method that aligns with their learning preferences, they tend to understand the material better and retain the information for a longer period of time. Students generally have a preference for a particular learning style (Kolb, 1984; Collin, 2007; Hawk & Shah, 2007; Cekiso, 2011; Gilakjani, 2012; Rau, 2012). The preferred learning style portrays the student's capabilities, environment and past learning experiences (Nulty & Barrett, 1996; Gilakjani, 2012; Rau, 2014). Students may switch to different learning preferences in specific circumstances, but they often stick to their preferred learning style. Different learning preferences have different characteristics, yet no learning preferences are better than another. Students have a diversity of learning preferences because they engage with information in different ways.

The first steps in helping pupils become more conscious of both their own and other people's learning styles is to acknowledge the variations in how they learn. Students learn more fast and readily and finally succeed in their academics when they are aware of their preferred learning techniques. Their understanding of learning styles aids in their acquisition of problem-solving techniques. Students take greater responsibility for their education as they become more adept at addressing problems (Biggs, 2001).

A great deal of research has been conducted on learning styles worldwide in order to understand how students learn (Bacon, 2004; DeCapua & Wintergerst, 2005; Hall & Moseley, 2005; Gould & Caswell 2006; Boström, 2011). As a result, many learning style theories andmodels have evolved (Miller, 1991; Milburn, 2000; Bacon, 2004). Coffield, Moseley, Hall and Ecclestone (2004) have identified 71 learning style models. The learning style theories provide a basis for different learning styles, create self-awareness among students, help lecturers and students to

become reflective, help students identify their learning styles, and enhance teaching (Dunn et al., 1990; Healey & Jenkins, 2000).

Learning style has its insightful impact on the particular dimensions of teaching and learning processes. Students have their own preferred way to recognize, retain and retrieve information. The purpose of this study was to identify learning preferences of English Department students' at State Islamic University of Sultan Syarif kasim Riau. The specific objective of the study was to describe the learning style preferences of the students. Learning is made more efficient when learning preferences awareness is included into the educational framework. Raising educators' awareness of the variety of teaching methods can also help them become more innovative and adaptable in their lesson plans.

METHOD OF THE RESEARCH

The design of this research is quantitative research with descriptive analysis. The population is the 6 semester English Department students. The sample is 25 students. The technique in collecting data is questionnaires. The instrument used for data collection was an instrument adapted by Brown (1999). There was 9 items. For each statement, the students were required to assess themselves using a two-point rating scale. The scale ranged from 1 (helped most), 2 (not helped most). The students gave two checks next to the ones that helped lot. The data was analyzed by using percentage.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The summary of scores from the learning styles assessment questionnaire demonstrates the dissemination of the different learning styles among students. The scores confirmed that the tool had validity, since the participants were able to measure their learning styles and, as a result, assess these styles in the context of their experiences. Tables 1 below contain summaries of students' scores on the learning styles assessment instrument, as per indicators:

Tabel 1. Individual learning prefrerences

Indicators	Helped most	Not helped most
Listening to the teacher	80%	20%
Working by myself	64%	36%
Working with a partner	84%	16%
Working with a group	80%	20%
Asking the teacher questions	28%	72%
Listening to the tapes and doing exercises	48%	52%
Reading	60%	40%
Writing Paragraph	20%	80%
Using the internet	88%	12%

The dominant learning preferences for students were using the internet (88%). These students learn best when they are using the internet. In teaching and learning process, when the students want to

know more about the material, they can use the internet. It also has increased research abilities, enhanced collaboration, and made online learning more accessible. Beside that, by using internet, it also had positive impacts on social interactions and media. The minor learning preferences were writing paragraph (80%). Writing paragraph seems difficult for the students. They have a hard time getting started and feel overwhelmed by the task. They need to concentrate to form letters: it is not an automatic process. They struggle to organize and use mechanics of writing. They are slow and inefficient in retrieving the right word(s) to express an idea.

Table 2. The most helped learning preferences indicators

Indicators	Helped most	Not helped most
Using the internet	88%	12%
Working with a partner	84%	16%
Listening to the teacher	80%	20%
Working with a group	80%	20%

From the table above it can be seen that, there were four learning preferences that most helped the students. For example using the internet (88%), working with a partner (84%), listening to the teacher (80%) and working with a group (80%) partner. During teaching and learning process most of the students like to do collaboration with a partner or in a group. When students have a partner who has the same interests and is committed to moving in the same direction, it can help relieve stress and increase the quality of support they can give to each other.Students not only gain a deeper understanding of academic concepts but also develop essential skills such as teamwork, problem-solving, and critical thinking. In addition, students who listen to their teacher gain a better understanding of the content the teacher presents and can identify the fundamental concepts. Their concentration ultimately results in storage of information in memory. This helps the student when he needs to recall and build upon prior knowledge, especially in a subject such as math, which is based upon previous skill attainment.

Table 3. The not helped most learning preferences indicators

Indicators	Helped most	Not helped most
Writing Paragraph	20%	80%
Asking the teacher questions	28%	72%
Listening to the tapes and doing exercises	48%	52%

There were 20% of students think it is not helped most writing paragraph, 28% of students do not want to ask questions to the teacher and 48% of students do not listen to the tape while doing the exercises.

CONCLUSION

Based on the finding it can be concluded that 88% of students learning preferences is using the internet and 80% of them not prefer to writing paragraph while studying. Learning styles and teaching styles have a relationship that determines a student's performance in higher education.

Understanding one's individual learning preferences may aid students in developing the skills necessary to select the learning styles that best fit their needs from a variety of styles to satisfy the particular demands of the job at hand. It is imperative for lecturers to acknowledge the diverse range of learning preferences exhibited by their students and devise a more equitable pedagogical approach that takes these preferences into account. Because students employ different learning preferences less frequently, it is best to intentionally generate a mismatch in learning preferences.

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