

Correlational Study Between Learning Style and Reading Comprehension at University Level Students

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Abstract— Each learner in the classroom receives and processes information in a unique way which makes the students distinct from one to the others, some learners may have a combination of learning styles. So, for a teacher it is really important to identify the learning style of his/her students so that the teacher should be able to use a variety of teaching techniques that are best to cater to all types of learners in their classroom. This study was conducted to investigate the correlation between learning styles and reading comprehension, to find out its relationship, its effect on reading comprehension and to know what is the best learning style in learning reading comprehension. This study is a correlational study of variables to determine the existence of a possible relationship between the two variables. This study was implemented on seventeen of graduate students, and to identify students' learning styles and their reading ability questionnaires and documents were used in gathering the data. After analysing the data, the result showed that there was a positive but low relationship between the two variables which come to the conclusion that students' learning style has only a minor effect on their reading comprehension ability.

Keywords— *Learning style, reading comprehension, correlation.*

I. INTRODUCTION

In a big class where the students inside the classroom are more than twenty, it is a common problem for teachers to choose the best method knowing that students learn in different ways. Each learner in the classroom receives and processes information in a unique way which makes the students distinct from one to the others. It is now a proven fact that different people learn differently, and psychologists also have attempted through the years to spell out the traits of different types of learners and group them into different some areas which are called "learning styles." Learning styles is a group of a common way of learning. Learning styles theory is based on understanding the differences between individuals' processing capabilities lead to significantly different learning requirements.

Certain points should be noted that (1) some learners may have a combination of learning styles. Meanwhile some learners may have only one dominant learning style. (2) In some cases, there are various learning styles in one classroom. In many occasions there are some students who are visual learners, while some are auditory and the others are kinesthetic learners. Visual learners learn visually which means by looking at charts, graphs, and pictures. Auditory learners learn by listening to lectures or audio and reading. While kinesthetic learners learn by doing or being involved. It mostly becomes a problem for the teacher to level the understanding of the students and to choose appropriate activities to cover all students in the class, especially when the students just prefer one learning style.

Learning style believed to have such a role in helping students to develop those four language skills, but this paper will only focus on finding the relationship between learning style and reading comprehension.

As Anderson, R, Hiebert, Scott, and Wilkinson stated that the basic life skill of reading is a vital step for success in both school and life. They further state that without the ability to read well, people will lose opportunities for personal fulfilment and job successes. Through reading people will be able to open an opportunity to open the gate to a bigger knowledge. Reading is quite essential in the process of learning in this case is learning the second language; English, since reading is included in passive skill which is mostly used as an input media while learning

This research focuses on some questions such as; (1) Is there any relationship between learning style and reading comprehension? (2) Does learning style have an effect on reading comprehension? and (3) which learning style best in reading comprehension? hopefully the research finding is able to help the teachers to identify the learning style of their students and help them to choose appropriate activities for all students to level the ability of reading comprehension in a big class.

Based on the background study explained above, here are some problems related to the two variables

discussed; learning style and reading comparison; (1) it is difficult for the teachers to level the students' needs while teaching accordance to the variety of their learning style. (2) Many students do not know their own learning style which leads their learning difficulties, especially in enhancing reading comprehension.

Some student lose their interest in learning language because they thought they would not be able to enhance their reading comprehension skill because in the class the teachers used the activity which is not suitable to their learning style

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

For English language teachers, identifying the students learning style could aid them in choosing the appropriate methods and strategies that can be used to cover all learning style of their students in order to improve students' achievement, Grace Fayombo (2015) stated that the alignment of teaching strategies and learning styles has a positive impact on the academic achievement of students. According to this, Tulbure (2012) found that there are significant differences between the achievement scores obtained by three categories of learners (convergers, divergers and accommodators) from two classes of a Romanian University after implementing the cooperative learning strategy. Likewise, Damrongpanit and Reungtragru (2013) also discovered significant differences between different matching conditions of students' learning styles and teachers' teaching styles after the academic achievement of more than 3000 ninth-grade students compared. Evidence abounds that matching teaching strategies and learning styles has a positive impact on the academic achievement and learning outcomes and that the match of teaching and learning styles in tertiary learners' second language acquisition can effectively improve students' achievement (Arthurs, 2007; Liu & He, 2014); motivation (Bell, 2007) and attitudes toward learning (Felder, 1996).

A. Definition of Learning Style.

Learning styles can be defined, classified, and identified in many different ways. Keefe (1979: 71) defines learning style as the composite of characteristic cognitive, affective, and physiological factors that serve as relatively stable indicators of how a learner perceives, interacts with, and responds to the learning environment. Essentially, learning style is not really concerned with *what* the learners learn, but rather *how* they prefer to learn material. Each student has his or her own best way to learn something. Some learners may rely on visual image or presentation, others prefer listening to music while learning, and still others may respond better to hands-on activities. Learning styles are found to affect students' learning behaviors. Students who have different learning style preferences would act differently in the way they perceive, interact with, and respond to the learning environment.

Brown (2000) characterizes learning styles as the way in which people see and process data in learning. He contends that learning style inclination is one part of learning style, and alludes to the decision of one learning circumstance or condition over another. Celcia-Murcia (2001) characterizes learning styles as the general methodologies that learners use in learning a new language or in some other subjects. The way in which a student sees, connects with, and reacts to the learning condition. Learning style also could be categorized as the trademark psychological, affective, social, and physiological behaviour that fill in as moderately stable markers of how students see, associate with, and react to the learning environment" (MacKeracher, 2004, p. 71).

B. Types of learning style.

Joy M Reid's state that there are three types of learning style. They are visual, auditory and kinesthetic (VAK) learning styles.

- Visual Learning Style.

Visual learners prefer to learn by seeing and watching a demonstration (Haggart, 2002). Thus, observations, examinations, and reviews are their favorite learning approaches (Haggart, 2003). □

They tend to need the stimulation of pictures, videos and movies. They prefer to have written directions in the classroom". (Oxford, 1995, p. 35). This may cause them to have difficulties focusing on the teachers if there are only a few visual tool-aids. □

- Auditory Learning Style.

Auditory learners prefer to learn by verbal instructions from themselves or others (Haggart, 2002). Thus, discussions, "thinking out loud," and listening is their favorite learning approaches (Haggart, 2003). □

. These students typically only need oral directions in learning because they enjoy the oral-aural learning channel". (Oxford, 1995, p. 36). They are good at remembering what they hear and may have difficulties remembering things that they have read. Also may have difficulties reading and/or writing.

- Kinesthetic Learning Style.

Kinesthetic learners prefer to learn by doing and direct involvement (Haggart, 2002; Hutton, 2006b). Kinesthetic learners learn best when they incorporate movements using their large or gross motor muscles (Keys Learning, 1993). □

They are those who "involving total physical movement in a learning situation" such as taking a field trip, playing drama, pantomime, or interviewing". (Kinsella, 1995, p. 172). In learning, they need hands-on learning (touching and moving). Due to their preference in being involved, being active and moving, they may have difficulties if they have to remain seated for a long period of time.

C. Reading.

Learning styles found to be affected by the student's learning behaviour in gaining information of learning. Besides listening skill reading is included as receptive skill, where the skill is used to retrieve information from the discourse that people see or hear (Harmer, 2001: 199). For this reason, reading becomes one of the most important skills in learning English which many students are not mastering yet in gaining and comprehending information of a text, especially in their reading achievement. For many language learners, reading is ranked first among the academic skills that they wish to gain mastery over (Grabe&Stoller, 2001;Richards and Renandya, 2002). Reading comprehension is a good way to let people think seriously about the exactly aim of what they are reading.□

Comprehension is the reason for people to read. They will find lots of texts in daily life to comprehend. Then, in comprehending a topic or main idea, people definitely interact with the text relating determining purpose of the text and finding messages or information which can be found in the text. Hence, it is necessary for people especially students in Senior High School to master reading comprehension in order to understand every text they will read along learning English.

Here are some assumptions of students' learning style which are related to their reading comprehension:

- Visual learning style refers to a preference for learning through vision and visual learners rely on their sight to take the information. They typically like to be able to read the textbook, journal, article, or newspaper on their own to increase their understanding. Yong (2010: 481) states that Visual learning style refers to a preference for learning through vision and visual learners rely on their sight to take the information.
- Auditory learners tend to like to read plays and dialogues, but they will have trouble reading silently and with speed when not allowed to vocalize. For students who have auditory style, they tend to always rely on the success of learning through hearing. Honey and Mumford (1999: 13) state auditory learners are able to memorize faster by reading text loudly and listening to tapes. The teacher should pay more attention to students who have an auditory learning style because they can learn faster by using verbal discussions and listening to what the teacher says. In other words, the teacher should try to always involve students who have auditory style to participate well in any discussion both inside and outside the classroom.
- Kinesthetic learners tend to like to read books and action-oriented books, but they will have trouble sitting still or listening for more than

four minutes. The student who has Kinesthetic style will learn through movements as a way to get information and transfer it into the brain. While Honey and Mumford (1999: 17) identify Kinesthetic learning style is a learning style in which learning takes place by the student carrying out a physical activity, rather than listening to a lecture or watching a demonstration. In the case of reading a text, they like to think out issues, ideas and problems while they exercise. In reading, something that must be underlined for students who have Kinesthetic style, always remember to make notes while they read and using efficient reading strategies will help them stay focused. Kolb (1984: 101) states that Kinesthetic learner is when you are learning a new skill or topic, you would prefer to 'jump in' and play with the physical parts as soon as possible. You would prefer to pull an engine apart and put it back together, rather than reading or looking at diagrams about how it works. In the case of reading, students who have a kinesthetic style will very interest in some specific texts. They are very excited when they asked to talk and discuss a text which is telling an adventure, field trip, visiting a special place, etc. Sometimes, taking lab classes and do the reading activity there will increase students of kinesthetic style in doing the activity.

TABLE 1. LEARNING_STYLE

		Freq	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid	Visual	12	70.6	70.6	70.6
	Auditory	4	23.5	23.5	94.1
	Kinesthetic	1	5.9	5.9	100.0
	Total	17	100.0	100.0	

III. RESEARCH METHODS

This study is a quantitative comparison of variables to determine the existence of a possible relationship between learning styles and reading comprehension ability. The information stated below provides a description of the population and sample of the study, instruments, and procedures that this study used.

A. Sample and population

The population of this research is the graduate students of the English Department Faculty at UIN Antasari Banjarmasin in South Borneo Indonesia the

academic year of 2014/2015. There are about 97 students of the eighth term from three classes of English Education Department from the population above, the sample was taken by using purposive sampling.

B. Instruments.

In collecting the data, the questionnaires and documents are used. The questionnaire consisted of 30 items referred to each group of learning styles preference; visual, auditory and kinesthetic learning styles from Joy M Reid in *Understanding Learning Styles in the Second Language Classroom*. To determine students' learning styles the response from the respondents was calculated and the sum of the response score used to classify students' learning style. And the students' reading score gathered through the data of their reading skill in their class score on the recent semester.

C. Data Analysis.

After collecting the data, the first step in analyzing the data was classifying the category of learning style from the questionnaire. In this study, The highest score from three group learning styles was the major of learning styles that students have. Then, the writer relates their learning style to document their reading score by using SPSS application to find the relation between the two variables.

IV. FINDINGS

After calculating the result from the questionnaires the writer found out several things which can be seen from the table below:

From here, it can be concluded that from seventeen participants, 12 of them are a visual learner, 4 of them are auditory while only one of them is kinaesthetic. Which assumes that among the participants, visual learning style was the most preferred learning style

A. Documents.

Then, from the document gathered from the correspondents the writer discovered the score achieved by the students in their reading class recently. The score distribution will be as follows:

From the table above it can be seen that 9 students from 17 correspondents got 'A' score in their class, 3 of them got 'B+', 4 of them got 'B' and 1 of them got 'C+'. relating to the first data gathered through the questionnaires, the writer found out that among correspondents whose learning style are visual seven of them got "A" score in their reading class, three of them got "B+" while one of them got "B" score and also one of them got "C+" score. While for the students whose learning style are auditory two of them got "A" score and the other two got "B"

score in their reading class. Then, for the student whose learning style is Kinesthetic got "B" score for his reading class.

TABLE II. READING_SCORE

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	A	9	52.9	52.9	52.9
	B+	3	17.6	17.6	70.6
	B	4	23.5	23.5	94.1
	C+	1	5.9	5.9	100.0
	Total	17	100.0	100.0	

To find the correlation between the two variables, the writer used SPSS to help in calculating the data, it is shown in table.3

TABLE III. CORRELATIONS

		Learning Style	Reading Score
Learning Style	Pearson Correlation	1	0.311
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.225
	N	17	17
Reading Score	Pearson Correlation	0.311	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.225	
	N	17	17

A Pearson correlation was run to determine the relationship between Learning style and students' reading comprehension through their reading score and from the table above, it is found that the significance score is .311. According to Sugiyono (2007) significance of correlation can be categorized as 0.00-0.199= very low, 0.20- 0.399 = low, 0.40- 0.599 = middle, 0,60 - 0,799 = high and 0.80- 1.000 = very high which means the correlation between the two variables is low.

V. DISCUSSION

Before the writer goes deeper to discuss what has been found in this research finding, the writer would acknowledge that there are some weaknesses in conducting this recent study. First,

this study conducted only in a small number of correspondences which may cause the data retrieved from the correspondents cannot represent the whole population where this study placed at, which also possibly making the data retrieved is not strong enough that needs further research in this study. □

Furthermore, the explorations of students' learning style only relied on questionnaires with no means of triangulation through the inclusion of other data sources, such as interview or observation. Moreover, the investigation of students' reading comprehension skill also could be explored more if test and/or in-depth interview techniques were also involved while collecting the data.

Even more, the writer limits the study on VAK learning styles which consists of Visual, Auditory and Kinesthetic concepts rather than all the six basic models introduced by Reid (1987). The findings focused only towards the VAK model. The reason why the VAK dimensions were selected for the study is to focus only on the main learning styles that are commonly used in English language classes.

To discuss the result of this research findings, according to the Pearson's correlation which have been run through SPSS to find out the correlation between learning style and students' reading comprehension, the writer claimed that the correlation between the two variables are low (<0.5) which means learning style did not have a big role in differentiating someone's reading comprehension ability. In accordance to this argumentation, the writer assumed that learning style which best in reading comprehension also could not be decided as the correlation between the two variables is low and cannot be used to determine what learning style best in reading comprehension.

VI. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

From this study we can conclude that learning style did not differ someone's reading comprehension ability. The writer assumed that as long as the students learn to

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