

Learning Styles Preferred by Basic Listening Class Students at English Department UNP

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Abstract

The variation of students in acquiring and understanding knowledge is influenced by learning styles. Each student has a variety of learning styles including visual, auditory or kinaesthetic learning style. Besides, it is very infrequent of them to aware of learning strategies that are compatible with their learning styles. Understanding learning styles may help students understand how they study and motivate themselves to achieve learning goals. This research was conducted to analyze the learning style preferred by students in the Basic Listening class at English Department, Universitas Negeri Padang (UNP). The analysis of this research was carried out through quantitative research. The study sample was all students who took Basic Listening course in batch 2019. The sample of this research was selected using a random sampling technique. The data was collected using two questionnaires that are Index of Learning Styles (ILS) Learning Style Questionnaire and VARK Questionnaire (Version 7.8). The analysis found that students who learned Basic Listening at English Department, UNP had different learning styles and the majority of their learning styles were dominated by visual styles. From both questionnaires, the students mostly have visual learning style. The percentage is 75,33% from ILS questionnaire and 56,33% from VARK questionnaire. It means that students in Basic Listening class easily understand the lessons that use images, graphs, maps, time lines, films, displays, etc.

Keywords: learning style, basic listening

Introduction

Learning is an important thing called a process to get various goals in life, especially in terms of education. It is known that each student is different in the way they learn something since each student has diverse strengths and unique intelligence (Adnan and Marlina, 2017, p. 235). The difference in the learning process not only comes from strength and intelligence but it can come from a variety of educational experiences and cultural backgrounds that are owned by students (Abidin, Rezaee, Abdullah, and Singh, 2011, p. 143). Pask (in Abidin, et.al, 2011, p. 143) also stated that “more than three-fifths of a person’s learning style is biologically imposed”. This means that the learning process cannot be carried out in the same way due to the biological differences in each individual.

Experts claim that “people enjoy different learning styles” (Adnan and Marlina, 2017, p. 235). That is definitely true that having various learning styles make the students easier in absorbing and processing of knowledge. Students must use all the senses in absorbing information. However, the students have a stronger tendency to learn in only one style. On the other hand, a large number of students feel frustrated when their exploration of learning styles are not of particular concern by the lecturer (Abidin, et al, 2011, p. 143).

Learning styles is the important component. According to Adnan and Marlina, (2017, p. 236) when the lecturer is able to understand the characteristics of student learning when selecting methods, Instructional methods and teaching materials adapted to the diversity of student learning types, implicitly enhancing the quality of the university’s teaching and learning process. This is also supported by Dunn (in Abidin, et al, 2011, p. 143) that learning style is a component that has a big impact on students. It is believed that, the learning style will be more fun if students learning styles and lecturer teaching styles are in line. Indirectly, students’ enthusiasm and participation are growing. However, if the variety between learning and teaching methods are not suitable for each other, this will confuse and frustrate both sides. The disparity in students’ learning styles and the teacher’s teaching style triggers the students’ primary problems in the learning process, such as lack of motivation to learn which results in a lack of interest in practicing English (Adnan and Marlina, 2017, p. 236).

Additionally, Keefe and Ferrell (in Abidin, et al, 2011, p. 143) stated that the students who are experienced problems in learning subject matter are often not related to the problem of the subject itself, but

to the type and level of cognitive process required for learning the material. Dunn (in Abidin, et al, 2011, p. 143) also found that the way of the lecturer teaches the students about one thing has greater impact than study program. This suggests that if the lecturer will consider the students' interests, all students and lecturers would likely maximize the educational process. Othman and Amiruddin (2010, p. 652) also said that "Teachers should be innovative in diversifying classroom learning techniques by being receptive to the educational needs of students", this is actually the lecturers' responsibility as the educator to know the students' learning styles in perceiving the lesson in order to make the process of learning become more effective and efficient.

The analysis toward the learning styles has been done by many researchers in various level of education, such as senior high school (Ardi, 2006; Abidin et al, 2011), university (Adnan & Marlina, 2017; Gantasala & Gantasala, 2009). Ardi explored learning style of senior high school in Padang. Furthermore, Abidin, et.al (2011) conducted research on the learning styles of Muslim students at an Islamic School in Northern Malaysia. They used the Learning Styles Survey (LSS) that was a viable tool to assess the preferred learning style of the students itself. They did research toward 317 students participated by using the Learning Styles Survey (LSS) focused on questionnaire of preference for perceptual Thinking-Style (1987) by Joy Reid. The findings of this research showed that most Muslim school students have several types of learning or a combination of various styles of learning in northern Malaysia.

Moreover, at the university level, a research that is conducted by Gantasala and Gantasala (2009) reported the influence of learning style in the process of studying. They had researched that the two-year MBA students used factor analysis; the learning style of the students became clear. Many students have visual, tactile, and kinaesthetic learning styles based on the theory of the cognitive method by Dunn and Dunn. Then, Adnan and Marlina (2017) that discussed about EFL students' Learning Styles in English as General Course at Universitas Negeri Padang (UNP). The result shows that English as a general course at UNP has multiple major learning styles which are dominated by Visual Language.

Based on all researchers done above related to learning styles, this research wants to see what kind of learning styles to be used by students, especially in Basic Listening class. This is important if the learning style used by students is in line with the teaching style used by the lecturer in order to achieve the goals of learning. The result of this study is also beneficial for lecturers who teach Basic Listening class at English Department of UNP to adjust methods, teaching techniques and teaching materials that appropriate with Basic Listening students' needs and learning styles.

Learning Styles

Learning styles are the way that students experience learning environments based on cognitive, affective and psychological traits, engage with it and react to it (Gantasala and Gantasala, 2009, p. 170). Therefore, gaining awareness of psychological process linked to learning, learning strategies and styles, and metacognitive skills has become important in the academic field (Malcik and Miklosikova, 2017, p. 211).

There are many learning style models which can be established from previous studies. These include models that have been developed by earlier researchers, such as Salmes models in learning styles, Felder-Silverman or Dunn and Kolb and Honey (Othmana and Amiruddin, 2010, p. 656) . According to the Malaysian Education Ministry (In Othman and Amiruddin, 2010, p. 656), two types of learning styles, Dunn & Dunn and VARK, are widely used. VARK learning style model is a type of learning adapted by Fleming from the VAK to the VARK learning style in 2006. The grouping of students in four different methods modifies this learning style. The models based on different senses, visual, aural, listening, and kinesthetic, as well as the name of the template itself, came from the letters of these senses (V, A, R, and K).

a. Visual

Students who tend to choose this style would likely to illustrate and understand by the explanation. Some students tend to use the chart to display their advances in education and to organize their ideas and thoughts. Besides this, visual students are easily disturbed or altered by motion or behavior when the sound does not normally bother them Drago & Wagner (In Othmana and Amiruddin, 2010, p. 656).

In comparison, visual students like to use the map, flowchart, pyramid, template and arrow resources that represent written data. By drawing an image or picture, they can also illustrate a definition to others. Murphy et al (In Othmana and Amiruddin, 2010, p. 656).

Miller (In Othmana and Amiruddin, 2010, p. 656) in his study explains that 29 percent students are more likely to learn the style visually, where they have intelligence in three-dimensional form using images, optical illusion and models. Visual learners are typically innovative, often tend to be creative and imaginative.

b. Aural

Drago & Wagner (In Othmana and Amiruddin, 2010, p. 656) stated that aural students learn something by listening. Aural students pay more attention to the teachers' expressions. They rather watch than take lecture notes. After classes begin, they decide to talk to classmates about things that are learned in a manner that clarifies their comprehension.

According to Miller (In Othmana and Amiruddin, 2010, p. 656) this kind of student will remember details while reading, particularly when learning something new. Students should re-listen to audiotapes, instruct others and share with educators to reinforce their memory. Aural students usually read smartly, write stories or poems easily, learn a foreign language instantly, have good vocabulary, spell easily, want to write letters, and have a clear ability to remember names or details Armstrong (In Othmana and Amiruddin, 2010, p. 656).

c. Reading

The students who have a tendency of reading prefer to read the information in the form of words and printed text as a way to obtain the information. Students with this tendency prefer lists, glossaries, textbooks, lecture notes, or circulation. Not only that, but these students also write the lesson in the form of sketches, paraphrase class notes, and study multiple-choice exam questions Murphy (In Othmana and Amiruddin, 2010, p. 656).

d. Kinesthetic

Drago and Wagner (In Othmana and Amiruddin, 2010, p. 656) stated that the students who tend to choose kinesthetics as those who stress more inexperience in understanding something and typically have high energy and choose to add touch, gesture and communication to their surroundings. These learners tend to do or move or grab something. For example, when studying, the students tap pencils or foot with objects and they enjoy handling objects. They cannot stay still when studying because they do remember what they have done rather than seen or heard. So, they will have better understanding if they do or grab something while studying.

The model of VARK learning style has been modified to four training modes, including visual mode, aural style, hearing mode and kinesthetic mode. It is based on those modes in which students can choose which learning mode is best suited to them during the learning process. (Othmana and Amiruddin, 2010, p. 656) Refer to Table 1.

Table 1. The tendency in learning process based on VARK mode

Mode	Tendency in learning process
Visual	Learning through viewing photos, graphs, videos and graphics. Could not take full note during the presentation.
Aural	Receiving learning through listening method, speaking or talking and explaining.
Reading	Prefer words and texts as method of obtaining information. They like presentation style, by text or writing.
Kinesthetic	Most likely to encounter something while learning through the dimension of physical movements such as touching, sensing, carrying, doing, and traveling. They prefer hands on work, practical, project, and real experience.

Research Methodology

This research aim to analyse the learning style of English students in English Department, especially for Education students who were taking Basic Listening class.

Research Population and Sample

In this research, the researcher used descriptive research. The population of this research was first year students of English Department at Universitas Negeri Padang who were taking Basic Listening class in batch 2019. There were 8 classes in English Department. From this population, the researcher took 1 one class from English Language Education Program. The type of the sampling in this research used random sampling. Random sampling is a technique where each element or member of the population has an equal chance of being selected as a sample.

Research Instrument

Because of the efficiency of the analysis of the learning style of students in basic listening skills, questionnaire is very appropriate to be used in this research. In collecting the data, the researcher gave the questionnaire that the students fill based on the type of their learning style in basic listening skills. The college students in the English Department filled that based on the time provided by the researcher.

There were two kinds of the questionnaire used in this research. They were ILS (Index of Learning Styles) adapted from University of Bradford and VARK version 7.8. In ILS questionnaire, there are four types of learning styles. They are active or reflector, sensing or intuitive, visual or verbal, and sequential or global. In VARK questionnaire, there are visual, audio, read or write, and kinaesthetic.

ILS (Index of Learning Styles) Questionnaire

Adopted from University of Bradford. In this questionnaire there are four types of learning styles. First is Active and Reflective students. Active students tend to retain better understand knowledge by doing something that is active with it, such as debating or applying it or demonstrating it to others. Reflective students prefer to think calmly first of all about issues. Second, students who are sensing and intuitive. Sensing learners tend to like details about learning; intuitive learners also prefer to explore possibilities and relationships. Third, Visual and Verbal. Visual students best remember what they see such as images, graphs, flow charts, time lines, videos, demos, etc. Verbal learners get more out of words such as written and spoken. Lastly, it is sequential and global. In sequential steps, learners tend to gain comprehension with each step logically from the previous step. Through large jumps, global learners tend to learn, consume information almost automatically without seeing the correlations, and the “get it” unexpectedly.

In this questionnaire there are 44 questions. Questions number 1-41 are related to the Active and Reflective style. Questions number 2-42 are related to the Sensing/Intuitive. Questions number 3-43 are related to the Visual/Verbal. And question number 4-44 are related to the Sequential/Global.

The VARK Questionnaire (Version 7.8)

VARK stands for Visual, Auditory, Read/Write and Kinaesthetic. There are types of students who learn by reading, they can quickly understand (the Read method). Some are quick to understand when explained in detail with other people (Auditory method). There is also a person who quickly understands if he/she sees a concept map / diagram / picture / video (Visual method). Finally, there are also those who quickly understand that he practices directly (or while moving; the Kinesthetic method). Using the VARK test is very useful for finding out what method is most suitable for a particular student. This test is used to find out what learning methods that help students to be able to understand the material in the class. In this questionnaire, there are four categories contained. That are Visual, Auditory, Read/write and Kinaesthetic. There are 16 questions of this questionnaire where all questions have 4 answer choices.

Data Analysis

In analyzing the data, the researcher distinguished the questionnaires according to their categories. The researcher analyses the two questionnaires utilizing SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). For ILS Questionnaire and VARK Questionnaire (Version 7.8), the researcher counts how many students choose their particular learning style for each type of learning style, then the researcher makes the percentage based on the data.

Results and Discussion

Results

Based on the results, it was found that the students had four types of learning styles: visual; auditory; read/write and kinesthetic. The most dominant learning style the students have is visual. For ILS Questionnaire Mostly the students have visual learning style (75,33%) as their learning style in basic listening skill. For the second choice is sensing (72,33%). The third choice is sequential (62,33%). Lastly, the students choose active (59,66%).

For VARK Questionnaire, mostly the students also chose visual (56,33%) as their learning style in basic listening skill. Second, the students chose audio (43,33%). Third, the students chose read/write (34,66%). Lastly, the students choose kinesthetic (25,66%).

Discussion

Each student has different learning style, for example, there are children who tend to visual and auditory but lesser kinesthetic involvement that they will behave differently in the way of interacting and responding to the learning environment (Adnan and Marlina, 2017, p. 235). Visual learners are the learners or students that study through vision. Auditory learners tend to hear or listen when studying. Kinaesthetic learners tend to do or move or grab something.

Listening skill is the core of second language proficiency, and also reflects that if listening is not tested, the lecturer will not teach it. Basic listening is a listening category which has basic language

knowledge, such as vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and other components of the language (Hadijah, 2016, p. 71). In basic listening there are two types of knowledge used, namely linguistic and non-linguistic knowledge. Understanding related to students' abilities in understanding phonology, syntax, lexis, semantics, and discourse structure is referred to as linguistic knowledge. Then, knowledge relating to topics, context and general knowledge is referred to as non-linguistic knowledge (Hadijah, 2016, p. 71).

In basic listening class of English Department at Universitas Negeri Padang in batch 2019 the students tend to learn by using visual learning style which means the learners study through vision where the percentage is 75,33% for ILS Questionnaire and (56,33%) for VARK questionnaire. It means that the visual learners remember best what they see for instance pictures, diagrams, charts, time lines, films, demonstrations, etc. Dunn and Dunn (in Gantasala and Gantasala 2009, p. 173-174) defined that "The strongest part of the visual learners is they have better memory through images." Therefore, if lecturers illustrate images or videos, the students will be easy to study.

The result of this research is similar with the research that conducted by Adnan and Marlina (2017) that students in English classes as General Course 2016 at Padang State University tend to use the Visual learning style where the percentage of 54%. Which means the students tend to see and observe while studying. It is going to make them have better understanding toward the lesson compared not to see the object.

Conclusion

To conclude, learning styles is an important component in the learning environment. Student learning styles should be suitable with the teachers' teaching styles in order to make the process of learning become easier and more directed. There are general types of learning styles, such as visual, aural, read/write and kinaesthetic. In here, the students have one style that they tend to. For the result of using the two questionnaire that is ILS and VARK, it produces the same types of learning style. For VARK questionnaire, the students tend to use visual learning style (75,33%). It is similar with ILS questionnaire the students also tend to use visual learning style (56,33%).

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