Teachers’ Perception on Students’ Learning Style and Their Teaching

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Abstract

Lack of teachers’ understanding in students’ learning styles and their teaching could cause unfacilitated teaching methods for example through the use of traditional lecturing methods. This issue brings the importance of this research objective to investigate teachers’ perceptions about learning style, their teaching, and the applied methods in the classroom. This study uses a quantitative research approach that is the analysis of learning style types for different students at different grade levels. To find out the perceptions of English teachers in this study, information was collected through 20 closed questions with data analysis to find out how the learning style influenced the teaching learning process of 28 English teachers. The findings of this study suggest that teachers’ understand about students’ different learning styles, so they adopt their students’ learning styles to their teaching. The last, teachers agree to use group discussion rather than lecturing methods by integrating ICT. In conclusion, teachers’ perception on students’ learning styles can increase their awareness to design teaching methods that differentiate students’ learning styles.

Keywords

Students’ learning styles; teaching styles

Article History

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INTRODUCTION

A number of theories interested in learners' specific characteristics have identified the learning styles and these characteristics have been organized into specific classifications of learners. Csapo & Hayen (2006) stated in the introduction of their study "An individual's learning style is the way he or she concentrates on, processes, internalizes, and remembers new and difficult academic information or skills." In addition, Grasha (1994) indicates that learning styles define to those personal qualities that influence a student's ability to acquire information, to interact with peers and the teacher and otherwise participate in learning experiences.

This theory explained that the ability of student to obtain the knowledge and work together with his/her friend, and the way he/she communicates with the teacher in learning process. In other hand, Pashler et al. (2009) state that learning styles describe to individuals' differences relate to what mode of instruction or study is most effective for them. Further, Research and writings was conducted by Litzinger et al. (2007) on learning styles stress that "learning styles are characteristic preferences for alternative ways of taking in and processing information".

In another hand, Kolb (1984) and Honey & Mumford (1992) in Jepsen et al. (2015) defined Learning style is an individual's preference for recognizing their experiences and change those experiences into knowledge. In addition, Litzinger et al. (2007) emphasized that "learning styles are a distinctive preference for various ways of retrieving and processing information".

According to Xu (2011) learning styles can be categorized into four types: perceptual learning style, cognitive learning style, personality learning style, and compound Learning Styles.

First, the perceptual learning style is called the sensory learning style. It focuses on taking the sense organs of learners in the learning process, such as the eyes and ears. Learners use their sense organs to practice external stimuli. This type consists of five styles namely, visual learning (learning by looking). Activities can be employed by visual learners who prefer to read books, see words, or see some teaching tools. Students like teachers write more than talk more. The use of images or graphics that present the words is appropriate for this learner. These learners will feel happy when the teacher applies grammatical learning approach. Auditory learners will feel happy when the teacher applies the words is appropriate for this learner. These more. The use of images or graphics that present.

Students like teachers write more than talk more. The use of images or graphics that present.

Students love learning to read and write. A text-based approach would be appropriate for this type of student to apply. Teachers need to provide additional material to facilitate their reading and habits. And Tactile students (learning by touching), and kinesthetic learning/practical learning (learn by doing) class. Tactical learners and kinesthetic learners are almost identical. Students would rather learn by touching something with their hands and moving them anywhere. This will feel good when the teacher uses a total physical response approach for this type of learner.

Second, the cognitive learning style relates to field independence and field dependence. Individual field study participants are identified as analytic learners who want to focus on the details of a foreign language and break it down into sections or parts. When they focus on the details, they may not pay attention to the whole thing. They are good analysts. They want to examine text or sentences into sections and find the true meaning. For learners who depend on the field, they learn globally. They want to focus on the whole learning material, whether a part or a sentence.

Johnson (in Xu, 2011) suggests that "independent learners appear to be better learners, and Ellis (2005) explores two hypotheses The first hypothesis recommends that field-dependent learners will be superior in language learning formal, while free learners learn well in informal language learning. "The second fielded hypothesis" field dependent learners will build communication and interaction with other L2 users. "However, these two hypotheses are highly controversial: Research on field dependence/field independence has built a relationship between cognitive style and L2 learning.

Third, there are two categories of learners in terms of personality that is reflective learner and impulsive learner. Reflective learners refer to how learning favors the accuracy of fluency. Before students talk, write or perform other production tasks, they want to consider things more
carefully and more thoroughly, they try to avoid mistakes. Conversely, impulsive learners want to be at risk. The important thing is the smoothness of the accuracy. They may make extra mistakes rather than reflective learners.

Learning combined learning styles defines those who have more than one learning style. Example; a student may be an impulsive student and visual student at the same time. But, his research on this type of learner is narrow. There may be a small number of learning style combinations and they remain to be confirmed. Brown (2003) states that learning styles present insight into how learners learn, work with their classmates and take action on the environment in which learning takes place.

Grasha (1994) describes the teaching style as a pattern of needs, beliefs and behaviors that are shown in the class. He has categorized four teaching styles: the Authority means the teacher displays the teacher center’s approach to teaching. Lectures are one of the dominant methods used in the classroom. Teachers provide detailed content or learning materials to keep their images and sculptures and the students receive them. Demonstrators/Personal Models, it also discusses teacher-centered classes in which the teacher as a model of presentation and encourages students to attend learning activities. Facilitators, teachers organize active learning, collaborative learning, and problem solving.

These teachers promote a student center where teachers facilitate some activities but students can process and practice them. Delegators are a category of teachers acting as consultative and students will always have the option of designing and implementing their own complex learning projects. According to Brown (2003) the style of teaching relates to beliefs and values that a teacher understands about the learner’s character in the learning process.

How can teaching style influence learning style?

The relationship between learning styles and teaching styles is well supported. It is still ambiguous that a student’s learning style causes how students can analyze the teacher. Ramsden (in Jepsen, 2015) demonstrated the quality of teaching associated with the quality of their approach that has been applied in the learning process based on students’ perceptions. In addition, Richards (in Jepsen, 2015) states that students who regard their teachers as ‘passionate, organized, knowledgeable and accessible’ are known as leaders for learning and these individual learners have an “optimistic impact on their learning”. Another statement about the idea that "teaching the awareness style" can support the effort in teaching and perhaps by improving the learning process contribute to reducing failure (Rayner and Riding, 1997, p. 21). In other hand, Brown (2003) describes learning styles as behaviors discussed by teachers and learners in the exchange of learning.

There are several related researches concerning English teachers' perspective on student learning styles and their teaching. Khanza (2015) concludes that teachers acknowledge students' learning style need to be responded by implementing several kinds of teaching methods including teaching materials. Similarly, the important of students' learning styles is also researched by Csapo & Hayen (2006) who point the rules of students' learning style to develop effective teaching and improve effective learning.

Finally, Xu (2011) notices the result of his research on students' learning styles for both students' and teachers' advantages. Particularly for students, if they recognize their learning style, they can understand the essence of learning process and be comfortable in learning. While For teacher, they can be triggered being adapted in applying different teaching methods for different students' learning style.

The learners attain and acquire knowledge with their own unique styles. These unique styles are named as learning styles. Learning styles can be defined as the way of individuals think, identify and remember the information. All of things that the students have will influence the student’s style in learning and the teachers are involved in all part of learning process.

Many previous studies have shown that students learn well when a teacher uses different materials, methods and strategies in the classroom. Researchers and investigators explore styles to formulate complementary learning environments and to teach adaptation styles to more students to foster learning and motivation. So, we can say that teaching cannot be separated by learning. A good teacher needs to know about the field of study and their ways to support student learning. Teachers can understand what students do with information, how students learn socially, patterns of motivation, what culture they bring from home to school, and so on.
In other words, teachers play an important role in making learning happen. In addition, it is very important for teachers to know the concept of learning style. Understanding this concept will help teachers plan and implement different methods to counter different learning styles that help in the learning process.

The main issue in the teaching and learning process is the lack of teacher awareness of the students' learning styles in the learning process and the understanding of the quality of their teaching. In fact many teachers still use their own way of teaching and following lesson plans regardless of students' needs or learning styles. This case will build a hostile atmosphere in the classroom so students feel that their problems in learning can not be facilitated by their teachers.

Moreover, the classroom and learning environment in Indonesia has always been in traditional habits and is dominated by lecturing methods that largely do not appeal to many students. They also teach by providing the material or content they get from textbooks, but they do not take into account the actual experience and come up with the actual conditions. Then, they teach in formal teaching methods, they do not make simple teaching deceptions that make students feel uncomfortable doing some activities in the classroom. On the other hand, they are not aware of student involvement. This problem can be illustrated that students can not practice significant classroom teaching experiences.

The purpose of this study was to investigate teachers’ perceptions on students’ learning styles, their teaching and teaching method applied in the classroom. To achieve the purposes, this study is grounded by the explanation of students’ learning style and teaching style theory. First, Learning styles refer to personal qualities that affect students’ ability to get information, interact with peers and teachers and otherwise participate in learning experiences (Grasha, 1994). They are categorized into perceptual learning style, cognitive learning style, personality learning style, and compound Learning Styles (Xu, 2011). Second, related to teaching style Brown (2003) defines it as the beliefs and values that a teacher understands about the learner’s character in the learning process.

Several related studies were conducted to show the teachers’ English perspective on student learning styles and their teaching. First, Khanza (2015) finds that teachers are aware of the concept of learning styles and they respond to learning styles in the teaching process through the application of various teaching materials and teaching methods.

Another study conducted by Csapo & Hayen (2006) shows how important it is to understand the learning style and its role effective teaching and learning. When teachers and students recognize how they learn, so the improvement of their learning increase. Xu (2011) in his research found that the needs to understand learning styles. For students, if they know their learner type, they can have a real image of the learning process and more awareness to learn, they may understand why they feel good about learning one feature while being uncomfortable in learning another. For teachers, they must consider that students’ learning styles may not be the same. Consequently, teacher must adapt and apply different and balanced teaching methods.

Most of the previous study above concerned more on the students’ learning style and less focus on the teaching style. Significantly, this study is crucial to extend its focus which is not only about students’ learning style side but also the teachers’ style side as reflected through their teaching methods. Furthermore, in this context this study contributes to develop teachers’ understanding to provide teaching methods which address different students’ learning styles.

This study focuses on answering the following research questions, (1) what is teachers’ understanding of students’ learning styles, (2) what are teachers’ perceptions toward learning styles and their teaching and (3) what are the methods applied by the teachers considering students’ learning styles?

METHOD

The type of this research is quantitative research approach. The data of this study were taken from survey. Survey is a method in quantitative research that engages the use of a questionnaire to explore a population’s characteristics, attitudes, behaviors, and opinions (Creswell, 2012). In this study survey is conducted to explore teachers’ opinion or perception on students’ learning style and their teaching. The samples of this research are 28 English teachers at Junior High School and Senior High School in Indonesia. English teachers were chosen because they have already implemented some approach in English classroom for several years of teaching.
The instrument of this study was questionnaire. McMillan (in Syam, 2009) states that questionnaire can use statements or questions, but in all cases the subject is responding to something written for specific purposes. In other words, questionnaires are tools which are fulfilled by the respondents themselves. The researcher decided to use questionnaire because it facilitated in collecting a number of data in short period of time and questionnaire is much more a practical tool (Bryman, 2012).

In addition, the researcher used questionnaires as the instruments because the purpose of this research was to find out the teachers’ perception about students’ learning style and their teaching. The questionnaire is adopted from Khan (2015) that consists of 20 closed ended questions within two weeks in October 2017 using Google form. The coverage of this questionnaire include some categories namely the teachers’ problems in understanding different ways how students learn, the teachers’ perception towards the application of variety of teaching methods, and the influence of teaching style to students’ learning styles.

To conduct this research, the data of this study were taken from survey through questionnaires in the form of Google form. The questionnaire was shared to 20 English teachers through social media like WhatsApp and Email with the link http://goo.gl/form/37rj62xgbZMZYnh. Then, the researcher let the respondents to answer the question directly by using their laptop, smart phone, and so forth. Afterward, the researcher collected the data displayed in diagram and table from Google form.

As soon as the data collected, the researcher used a data analysis to process and interprets the data. Data analysis is the orderly method done to help the researcher to build understanding towards the instruments or materials. In analyzing the data, the writer used three steps as follow. After having the survey by the questionnaire, the writer identified the data into categories: the data about the problems the teachers face in classroom regarding the ways of students learn, the teachers’ perception towards the concepts of learning style, and the variety of methods used in the classroom.

Then, the researcher provided descriptive analysis of the data using graphs and percentages (Hamied, 2016). In this case, the percentage of total sample responding for each item on a survey questionnaire should be reported, as well as the percentage of the total sample who choose each alternative (Fraenkel & Norman, 2008)

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Respondent’s background information is presented by gender, teaching experience, and education background. Respondent’s background information is presented by gender, teaching experience, and education background. Based on the gender; 43% of the teacher respondents were male while 53% were female. Furthermore, it was presented from the teaching background, 61% of the teacher respondents has been taught between 0-5 years while 39% has experienced in teaching about 6-10 years. The last is presented by education background, 94% teacher has completed Bachelor Degree and 3.6% has Received Master Degree.

Table 1 Participant’s Identity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal identity</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching experience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-5</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last degree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A. What is Teachers’ Understanding of Students’ Learning Styles?

Overall, English teachers understand that they were interested about the way students learn and believe that the students have different preferences while acquiring new information. The teachers’ perception towards their understanding of students’ learning style will be reported as follow.

Figure 1 Teachers’ View Regarding the Students’ Learning Style

The results addressed 14 English teachers (68.8%) said agree and 7 teachers (25%) strongly agree, 3 teachers (10.3%) said undecided, 3 teachers (10.3%) said disagree, and 1 teacher
(3.6%) said strongly disagree. As indicated by the reason of the teacher, they believed each student have different preferences while acquiring or processing the knowledge and new information. In addition, they are interested in to know how students learn.

**Figure 2** Teacher’s Familiarity Regarding the Concept of Learning Styles

Based on result it can be inferred that 14 teachers (50%) stated that they first have been introduced the concept of learning style through personal reading or surfing internet, 5 teachers (17.9%) have heard the concept of learning style from colleagues or other teachers, 8 teachers (28.6%) knew the term of learning style through training/ workshop 1 teacher (3.5%) come to know the notion from the student. According to the reason of the 28 respondents, it can be presumed that the teachers have been introduced the concept of learning style and 1 teacher is still not aware about the concept.

**Figure 3** The Statement “If the students do not learn the way you teach, teach them the way they learn”

Figure 3 showed 10 teachers (35.7%) strongly agree about the statement that when the students not learn the way teacher teach, the teacher need to teach them the way they learn, 10 teachers (35.7%) agree about the statement that the teacher need to teach the students based on the way they learn when the students not learn the way teacher teach, 3 (10.7%) undecided about the statement, 2(7.1%) disagree, and 3 (10.7%) are strongly disagree. It can be concluded that the teachers feel confident and sure that their teaching will be interested by students.

**Figure 4** Teacher View on “Student should adopt their learning style according to teacher’s teaching style”

B. What are teachers’ Perceptions of Their Teaching Considering the Learning Styles?

Figure 5 indicates that 14 teachers (50%) agree that the student have good feeling regarding their teaching style in learning process, 7 teachers (25.7%) strongly agree that the student feel good about their ways in teaching, 3 (10.7%) undecided, it means that the student feel good and sometime feeling not good to their teachers, 3(10.7%) disagree, and 1 (3.6%) are strongly disagree. It can be concluded that the teachers feel confident and sure that their teaching will be interested by students.

**Figure 5** Teacher’s View on Students Feeling Good About Their Teaching

Figure 6 described 13 teachers (46.4%) agree about the statement that the teachers should adopt their teaching style according to student’s learning style, 7 teachers (25.7%) strongly agree about the statement, 5 (17.9%) disagree, and 3 (10.7%) are undecided. By reason of the 28 respondents, it can be concluded that the teachers are believed that they need to adopt their teaching quality by considering the student’s learning style.
C. What Are the Methods Applied by the Teachers Considering Students’ Learning Styles?

Table 2 presented 10 teachers (35.7%) agree and 2 teachers (7.1%) strongly agree, 25% undecided that the teacher still dominant use lecture methods. Around 11 teachers (39.9%) and 9 teachers (32.1%) apply group discussion as well as demonstrations in their teaching. The teachers demonstrate by providing personal examples that can be showed from the percentage of agreement from 12 teachers (42.9%) agree and 6 teachers (21.4%) strongly agree. Then, 17 teachers (60.7%) agree, 7 (25%) are strongly agree to facilitate and explore options so that students think about it in order to make active learning environment. The least option showed by teachers left the students to find out the knowledge independently and practice it about 5 teachers (17.9%) are agree and 3 teachers (10.7%) are strongly agree.

Furthermore, table 3 illustrates the teacher’s view on “Teachers should adopt their teaching based on student’s learning styles.”

Table 2: The Methods Used by the Teachers While Teaching Something New and Difficult

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use lecture method</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>32.1%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make groups and discuss it</td>
<td>32.1%</td>
<td>39.3%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate by providing personal examples</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitate and explore options so that the</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>60.7%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>students think about it</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leave it</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>32.1%</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Teachers’ Idea About When Do Students Learn Better

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explain lesson to others or speak it aloud</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>See pictures, diagrams, flip charts, graphs,</td>
<td>39.3%</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>films and handouts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do things and hand-on experience</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>53.6%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highlight important points in chapters and</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>summarize information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
more attention to teach students according to their needs. This awareness can make it easier for teachers to interpret their teaching to focus on the learning styles in their teaching (Archarya, 2002) in Khan (2015).

Sequentially, the finding from Figure 2 shows clearly those teachers initially knew the concept of learning style through personal readings or internet browsing. Research on learning styles suggests that teachers should be familiar with the importance of learning styles and their function in improving learning. This is related to the respondents’ teaching experience which is 0-9 years; teachers are advised to improve information by reading the broad material to understand the requirements of updating educational issues, especially learning styles and development of teaching.

Moreover, the findings in Figures 3 and 4, teachers believe in the suitability and incompatibility of teaching based on student learning styles. Some studies support the suitability of teaching with learning styles but other researchers such as Archarya (2002) and Brown (2003) show a positive perception of incompatibility. They suggest that with difference learning styles, students will understand new learning habits and students will probably improve their skills. In addition, they suggested that it would not be a matter of incompatibility between the way the students learned and teaching style in teaching, but the main problem was misunderstanding about student learning style.

In relation to the findings from Table 2 show the teacher’s view of teaching aids applied by the teacher while teaching in the classroom. Teachers are the most commonly used teaching aids by writing important points on the board and lecture methods. Many studies explore that dominant teachers teach the same way and repetitive activities that make students feel bored in learning. Teachers need to remember that taking into account the frequency of writing a higher important point, the board of directors stands to reflect on the previous experience of their learning process. The findings also illustrate that good teaching focuses on serving students to attach what they have learned or new information will be learned by implementing different strategies in their teaching so as to provide real examples of life, facilitating and exploring options so that they can think about it and display objects learn.

Finally, from table 3 it is illustrated that students love to learn when teachers deliver lessons by integrating ICT in classes such as video, flip charts, PowerPoint presentations, and whiteboards. In order for teaching/learning to be more valuable, it is necessary to understand how to operate and integrate appropriate materials through ICT. Teachers can also provide materials in front of the class by assigning tasks to students or the task of summarizing the topics to be learned for the next meeting via their own Smartphone or computer.

CONCLUSION

Understanding the concept of students’ learning styles can make future teachers easier to develop their teaching quality with better skills and attitudes. It can make teachers and students’ interaction more effective in and out of the classroom. In fact, it’s complicated to change students’ learning styles in terms of their cognitive, habits, personalities that is why it is important that teachers become aware of the concept or theory of learning styles and further identify student learning styles. For the first one, they need to conduct a survey to categorize our student learning styles. Based on the data they found from the survey, they can decide what learning style is the most dominant in a particular class and how many smallest styles in this class. They can rate them. They designed our teaching methods that differentiate learning styles. In other words, they can place support for students with similar learning styles and this will build a more student-centered and comfortable teaching to understand.

Regarding the teaching methods, many activities involved in particular methods can be designed appropriately for students with different learning styles. For hearing learners, teachers can apply activities including giving oral reports, oral discussions of written materials, debates, interviews and so on. For the Visual Learners type, they can make suggestions for learning experiences like giving text with lots of pictures, graphics, cartoons, comics, posters, stories with pictures, maps, and so on. For tactile learners, teachers need to provide learning activities that can be liked by them including painting, modeling, drawing, singing, playing board games. For kinesthetic learners, they have to build activities that can move their bodies like modeling, gaming, and motion activity. So it can be assumed that the use of only one approach or teaching method can not facilitate all the students’ needs.
in the classroom. Example; the communicative approach may not be appropriate for visual students.

English teachers are encouraged to diligently seek updates on their learning styles and the quality of their teaching by reading, browsing the Internet, exchanging information with colleagues, and attending training and workshops. Teachers also need to be creative, innovative, and adaptive to design materials that match the way students learn to encourage students to be self-confident, active and independent in learning English. In addition, the government and schools should provide more training on the socialization of learning styles and the quality of teachers and improvement of school facilities to support their implementation. Other recommendations for further researchers, they can have large number of students' perception on their learning style to be compared with this study.

REFERENCES