



The Analysis of Students' Learning Style Preferred by Basic Listening Classes of English Department at Universitas Negeri Padang

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Abstract

This research was conducted to analyze the learning styles preferred by students in the Basic Listening classes of English Department, Universitas Negeri Padang (UNP). This descriptive research used a quantitative descriptive method. The research instrument was a questionnaire. There were 2 questionnaires used in this research. The first VARK questionnaire (Version 7.8) was designed by Fleming. VARK questionnaire represented visual (V), aural (A), read/write (R), and kinaesthetic (K). It consisted of 16 questions with four options. The second questionnaire was the Index of Learning Styles (ILS) designed by Richard M. Felder and Barbara A. Soloman in 1997. This questionnaire was categorized into four dimensions, namely active or reflective, visual or verbal, sensitivity or intuition, and sequential or global. It consisted of 44 questions with 2 options. The population of this research was the students in Basic Listening Classes of English Department. The sample was 65 students from two classes, namely the K3 and K5 basic listening classes by using cluster sampling. The results of this study indicate that students in class K3 and K5 have varied learning styles based on the VARK questionnaire, which means that students in the class can follow the learning process well with methods that lead to visual, auditory, read/write, and kinesthetic. Then, based on the ILS questionnaire, it shows that students in class K3 and K5 tend to use visual learning style, which means that the majority of them enjoy in the learning process by the assistance of pictures, charts, and videos because they can comprehend the material better.

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INTRODUCTION

In English, there are four skills that must be mastered by students, namely listening, reading, writing, and speaking. From those four skills, listening skills are the first step that must be learned and mastered. Before students understand and start to speak, they must hear sounds, voices and words. Listening skill is a skill that is different from

other language skills. This skill is very complex because there are mental processes that are not visible. The students must be able to distinguish between sounds, understand the vocabulary and structure of the words, interpret the expected stresses and intentions and try to find the meaning of what the speaker is saying. In other words, it can be said that listening is a challenge for students. They need to have good listening skill because in teaching and learning process, the teacher dominantly uses English to explain material and conduct discussions. According to Hinchem (2013, p. 1) listening is the dominant activity (40%) in daily communication, 35 % for speaking, 16 % for reading, and 9 % on writing. In other words, communication will not run well if it is not supported by good ability in listening.

According to Underwood (1990), in the listening process, the students will pay attention and try to get the meaning of something they hear. The students must be able to understand what the speakers mean when they use certain words in certain ways and at certain occasions to be successful in the listening process. Furthermore, the listening process is not only providing information to gain knowledge but also the way to understand information that has been conveyed orally. To know how the way the students perceive the information in listening class, it has to be analyzed through the learning style preferences.

Learning style is the way the students perceive, interact with, and respond toward the learning environment based on the cognitive, affective, and psychological traits as stated by Gantasala and Gantasala (2009, p. 170). It has been known that students' learning styles are different for each person because of their biological and psychological differences in understanding their study. Pask (1988) showed more than three-fifths of one's learning styles are biologically imposed. It is related with the term of factors, specifically connected to the characteristics of students stated by Miller (2001). According to Miller (2001, p.3) the characteristics of the students are very varied in terms of age, culture, level of mentality preparedness, intelligence, and psychological conditions, which lead to differences in individuals.

Experts assert that in the learning process, most students enjoy the listening process based on their preferred learning style. In the learning process, learning styles are the important component. Each student has their own unique intelligence and strengths. It means that each student is different from one another in the way they learn. Some students are able to process the information best through viewing or reading charts, diagrams, or written text. In the other sides, some other students are able to process information well through experience or touching, working, and movement. Several recent studies have shown that to help motivating the students in the learning process, there must be a match between learning and teaching styles because learning style is one part of the learning process that helps determine how and how well students learn.

Although learning style is an important thing in the teaching and learning process, most students and lecturers are not aware of the learning style preferences (Honey &

Mumford, 1992). Due to the lack of awareness about learning style, it causes the diminution the interest of the students to learn and affect their learning progress. Therefore, students must know their learning style preferences so that lecturers can choose strategies, methods, teaching techniques, and teaching materials that are appropriate with the variety of student learning styles to achieve learning goals. If the lecturer understands and considers the characteristics and learning styles of students, the quality of teaching and learning process can be improved as stated by Adnan & Marlina (2017, p. 236). The awareness about learning styles will give more positive things that can be obtained such as a pleasant learning environment, students' motivation, and interest in learning.

Concerning the background of the problem above, each student has a different way in learning process. They have their own strengths and varied intelligence. However, not many students and lecturers are aware of the variations in learning styles. Lack of awareness of learning styles causes lecturers only use one method and strategy during the learning and teaching process. This gives an impact to students who will feel less interested and motivated to keep up in the learning process. Due to these problems mostly happen in listening class, therefore, the researcher wanted to know the learning style that preferred by the students who took basic listening in class 2019 of English Department especially in English language study program at Universitas Negeri Padang.

METHOD

In this study, the researchers decided to use quantitative descriptive methods because the information conveyed was a type of student learning style preference. As it is stated by Bungie (2001, p. 61) that quantitative descriptive is designed in qualitative research whether it is not actual qualitative research because content construction is influenced by quantitative data. This research was conducted at the English Department of Universitas Negeri Padang and used two questionnaires. The questionnaires were used as a tool to find the type of student learning style based on sensory aspects and from the four-dimensional aspects. Then the data are analyzed to answer the research questions.

The population of this research was English Department students of Universitas Negeri Padang in the academic year 2019. It focused on English Language Educational Program. The population of this research was all classes of basic listening class students in 2019. There were 6 classes in total. In this study, the researcher took two classes to be sampled and this research used cluster sampling techniques. The cluster sampling technique is also called the group technique or clump technique, this technique is done by selecting samples based on clusters, not individuals as stated by Lavrakas (2008). In this study, the researcher took all students in two classes, namely K3 and K5 classes.

This research used the questionnaire as the instrumentation. Kumar (2011, p. 141) defined the questionnaire as a list of written questions in which the answers are recorded by respondents. When filling out the questionnaire, the respondent will read the question, make an interpretation, and then give the answers to the questions given. The researcher used two questionnaires. The first questionnaire was adapted from the VARK Version 7.8 questionnaire which was proposed by Neil Fleming in 1987. VARK stands for Visual, Aural, Read/Write, and Kinesthetic. This questionnaire is a sensory modality that is used to learn something. In the learning process, these four modalities reflect the students' backgrounds. This questionnaire has 16 questions which each question has four options. Each question has options (A, B, C, D) that reflect the type of learning style.

Then, the second questionnaire was adopted from ILS (Index of Learning styles) questionnaire by Richard M. Felder and Barbara A. Soloman in 1997. This questionnaire is categorized into four dimensions, namely processing (active or reflective), input dimensions (visual or verbal), perception (sensitivity or intuition) and understanding (sequential or global). To find out a student's learning style based on the dimensions, measurements were taken using the Index of Learning Style (ILS) Questionnaire. This questionnaire includes 44 questions and has 2 options for every question

In collecting data, the researcher started by delivering both questionnaires to samples. The questionnaires were shared to the respondents of two classes of the basic listening class. Then, the data from the questionnaires were accumulated into Excel program and then the result was analyzed by the researcher. The researcher classified the questionnaires based on the types of two questionnaires. The data that had gained with the questionnaires then were analyzed by using Excel programs and SPSS. 25. The descriptive statistics of frequencies and percentages were used by analyzing results based on the types of learning styles. Then it was continued with scoring and labeling the samples based on their types.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Research Finding

Based on the description and analysis above, the researcher found that the learning styles of students in K3 and K5 classes by using VARK questionnaire (Version 7.8) were not dominant or it can be said that the learning styles in these classes are varied with the percentage of K3 was 28% for kinesthetic, 25% auditory, 24% Read / Write and 23% Visual. Then, the percentage of K5 class was 29% for Read / Write, 25% for Kinesthetic, 24% for Visual and 22% for Auditory. It means that the students in the K3 and K5 classes are able to process information well by using a variety of ways such as using diagrams, picture textbooks, videos, flipcharts for visual learning styles, doing physical activities for kinesthetic learning styles, listening to detailed explanations

from lecturers for auditory learning styles and discover the knowledge displayed on words with emphasis on accuracy in dialects, quotes, notes, writing and books for the Read / Write learning style.

The learning styles of students in K3 and K5 classes by using ILS (Index of Learning Styles) questionnaire showed that the learning styles of these classes have a dominant learning styles preference. The percentage of K3 was 47% Visual / Verbal, 30% for Activist / Reflector, 21% for Sensing / Intuitive and 2% for Global / Sequential. Then, the percentage of K5 class was 42% for Visual / Verbal, 27% for Activist / Reflector, 27% for Global / Sequential and 4% for Sensing / Intuitive. From the dimensions of the learning style, the students in these classes can process information well by using photos, pictures, diagrams, series, films, and demonstrations as the media so that they can remember the information well. They tend to like the learning strategies by using tools that are closely related to visuals such as graphic presentations in the teaching process. Besides, the students in this dimension also like to learn through words and explanatory explanations that are closely related to verbal. They tend to provide verbal explanations and discussions in group study conducted in class. They often read aloud and repeat several times to understand information and knowledge easily and quickly.

Discussion

Based on the findings in the research, it needs to be discussed related to the theories. In this research, the researcher discussed the findings of the research based on the research questions which are the type of students learning styles in basic listening classes in 2019 of the English Department at Universitas Negeri Padang according to VARK questionnaire (Version 7.8) and Index of Learning Styles (ILS) questionnaire. Through the two questionnaires distributed in two classes that were K3 and K5, it showed the same results on the VARK (Version 7.8) questionnaire and the ILS questionnaire. The VARK questionnaire showed the results that the students in the K3 and K5 classes were not dominant, or it can be said that the learning styles in these two classes are varied. Through the ILS questionnaire, it showed the same results in K3 and K5 basic listening classes wherein these two classes the majority of the students had a learning style preference for visual/verbal learning styles.

Based on the research from Prystiananta (2018), it showed that the students of the AAK PGRI Jember Accounting Study Program tend to like the Visual learning style (44%) as an English learning style. This result is similar to this research where the ILS questionnaire also showed that the majority of students in the K3 and K5 basic listening classes have a preference for Visual / Verbal learning styles. However, the research from Prystiananta (2018) only conducted research on learning English as a foreign language, not specific skills in English. Then, the research conducted by Wulandari, et.al (2019) showed the different results from this study where the learning

styles that are most widely used are auditory (average score: 2.85), visual (average score: 2.75) and kinesthetic (Average score: 2.50). Her research focuses on the learning styles used in listening learning in semester V students of the English Education Program of the University of Bengkulu for the 2018/2019 academic year.

Then there is research conducted by Srijongjai (2011) on the learning styles of students majoring in Thai English in EFL writing classes. The aim of this study was to identify these students' learning styles and to see if there were significant differences in their learning styles based on their level of achievement in their English writing courses. The participants of this study were 88 second-year English majors at B.A. Program at the Faculty of Humanities, Srinakharinwirot University, Thailand. The instruments used in this study were the Memletics Learning Style Inventory and semi-structured interviews. The data analysis showed that the students' average primary and secondary learning styles were social and aural, which showed different results from this study. The results of previous studies produced the same results as this study, but the instruments and samples used by previous studies were different from this study. However, it can be seen that the students in EFL classes have different learning styles to support the learning process.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion

Learning style is the way the students perceive, interact with, and respond toward the learning environment based on the cognitive, affective, and psychological traits. It has been known that students' learning styles are different for each person because of their biological and psychological differences in understanding their study. In the learning process, learning styles are the important component. Each student has their own unique intelligence and strengths. It means that each student is different from one another in the way they learn. Some students are able to process the information best through viewing or reading charts, diagrams, or written text. In the other sides, some other students are able to process information well through experience or touching, working, and movement. Several recent studies have shown that to help motivating the students in the learning process, there must be a match between learning and teaching styles because learning style is one part of the learning process that helps determine how and how well students learn.

Although learning style is an important thing in the teaching and learning process, most students and lecturers are not aware of the learning style preferences (Honey & Mumford, 1992). Due to the lack of awareness about learning style, it causes the diminution on the interest of the students to learn and affect their learning progress. Therefore, students must know their learning style preferences so that lecturers can choose strategies, methods, teaching techniques, and teaching materials that are appropriate with the variety of student learning styles to achieve learning goals. If the

lecturer understands and considers the characteristics and learning styles of students, the quality of teaching and learning process can be improved. The awareness about learning styles will give more positive things that can be obtained such as a pleasant learning environment, students' motivation, and interest in learning.

Suggestion

Based on the conclusion and the implication above, there are some points that can be suggested. The first is the students have to know their preferences in learning styles to help themselves to achieve the goals of learning easily. The second is the lecturer must know the learning styles of their students in order to implement the appropriate teaching methods and strategies according to the learning style preferences of the students to achieve more effective way learning. Lastly, it is suggested to the next researchers to conduct the research that discusses about the students' learning styles based on behavior, learning styles based on the ability of students as well as learning styles based on the gender in basic listening class.

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