
STUDENTS' LEARNING STYLES: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY AT UIN WALISONGO SEMARANG

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Article History:

Received: January 12, 2016

Accepted: February 12, 2016

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Abstract: This research is aimed to know what kinds of learning preferences are students intended most? And how many types of learners' characteristics appear in ELT classrooms? This research was conducted through qualitative approach. This means that the data are collected not in the form of numbers, the data are taken from questionnaires, documentation, and observation. The results of this study are as follows: students of ELT program at UIN Walisongo Semarang tend to study by various kind of learning. It can be proved that First, regarding to the description of 2A class which has 11.2% visual students, 16.02% of audio-lingual, 5% kinaesthetic and 14.11% are others, would use multimedia which is available in the classroom. Whereas, the description of 2B class has shown that 13% students are visual learners, 11% audio-lingual learners, 6.72% kinaesthetic and 13,72% are others. Last but not least, there are 12% visual learners, 11.17% audio-lingual, 7.25 kinaesthetic and the rest 14% others. Furthermore, there are four characteristics which appear from the research, they are as follows: visual learners, auditory learners, kinaesthetic learners, and other characteristics.

Keywords – Learning-styles, Unity of Science

INTRODUCTION

In this modern era, the most substantial problems for teachers interested in using a learning styles approach in their classrooms is that the “field” of learning styles that is so crucial indeed. There are lots of researchers have regularly identified aspects of learning and created new terms and instruments, which is no doubt an indication of the complexity of the learning process. As others build on and modify that “field” becomes wider and less

focused; consequently, the result of the research are more confusing for teachers and students to apply. There can be optimistic in hopping valid and reliable learning styles in classroom; makes students “profiles” are more clearly defined. It is probably, that students’ profiles become common place, the risk would be high. Students might be stereotyped, or students might pigeonhole themselves, thus limiting their learning potential and success.

So teacher must approach learning styles with some caution; are not a panacea. Rashers, a becoming aware of learning and teaching styles can be better preparation of teachers for the multicultural classroom. In addition, raising students’ awareness to the advantages and disadvantages of learning styles instruments will make students not only more prepared for learning, but also more analytic about learning styles.

The other problems facing teacher is the difficulty of being all things to all students. For example, if we expect teachers to the styles of every student in learning situation, we will certainly be disappointed. One solution to solve this problem is preparing students to be administered and involving them in situation of teaching-learning process. Then, teacher should be raising learning styles awareness in both teachers and students, asking most learners to develop teaching techniques that address the board needs of learners, and teaching students to experiment with extending their preferred styles.

Learning

Manser (1995) says learning is relatively permanent change in a behavioural tendency and as the result of reinforced practice. Learning is an activity to gain knowledge or skill. Therefore, learning is the process by which skills, knowledge, attitude, and behaviour are formed and developed. It takes place as a result of education, training and socialization. Brown (2000) breaks down the components of the definition of learning, we can extract as we did with language, domains of research and inquiry. They are as follows:

- a. Learning is acquisition or “getting”
- b. Learning is retention of information or skills
- c. Retention implies storage system, memory and cognitive organization
- d. Learning involves active, conscious focus on, acting upon events outside or inside and organism
- e. Learning is relatively permanent but subjective to forget
- f. Learning involves some forms of practice, perhaps reinforced practice.
- g. Learning is a change in behavior

These concepts can also give away to a number of subfields within the discipline of psychology: actuation process, perception, memory, system recall, conscious, learning style and strategies, reinforcement and the role of practice (Brown: 2000).

Learning is the process of teaching students by using the principle of education and theoretical, learning is the determinant main of education (Syaiful, 2006:61). Hamalik (2007:77) argues that learning is a system that is a whole consisting of the components interact between one to another and with the whole itself to achieve the goal of teaching that has been set in advance, as for these components include the purpose of education and teaching, learners and students, educational personnel, especially teachers, lesson planning, teaching strategies, instructional media, and teaching evaluations. According to Dimiyati and Mudjiono (2006:17) learning is teacher's instructional program, in design to make students learn actively; who insists on provision of learning. Whereas Coney (in Sagala, 2006: 61) says that learning as a process whereby someone is purposefully managed to allow him/her to participate in attitude in special or certain conditions produces response to a particular situation.

It can be concluded that learning is a process undertaken by teacher who has been programmed to teach students for getting the purpose of learning as specified in accordance with instructions curriculum prevailing. In the process of learning requires teachers to create a good atmosphere of learning that students can learn in an active manner.

Types of Learning

a. Individual learning

All individuals learn- whether they do it consciously or unconsciously. It is a fundamental requirement of existence. Individual learning is defined as the capacity to build knowledge through individual reflection about external stimuli and sources, and through the personal re-elaboration of individual knowledge and experience in light of interaction with others and the environment.

Here, we refer to individual learning in the context of organization. In other words, it implies that how an individual learns in an organization and how is it important in an organization. Hence, Gardner (1998) explains that every human has his own multiple intelligences such as: verbal/linguistics; logical mathematical; visual/spatial; interpersonal; musical/ rhythmic; bodily/ kinaesthetic and naturalistic. Furthermore, there are also a number of intelligences which are called by spiritual quotation and accentual one. Every single human has those intelligences, but what

should to know that they have varieties of intelligences. Besides, there are some main types of learning styles. They are as follows: auditory, visual and kinaesthetic. In order to get good result of learning, most people apply these three combinations of these learning styles.

b. Four types of learning

There are four types of learning:

- Learning type 1: auditory learning (“by listening and speaking“),
- Learning type 2: visual learning (“through the eyes, by watching”),
- Learning type 3: heptic learning (“by touching and feeling”),
- Learning type 4: learning through the intellect.

METHOD

This research uses qualitative approach. It means that the data are collected not form of numbers, but data were taken from manuscript interview of notes field, documents personal, notes memo and other formal documents. So the purpose of this qualitative study was to describe the empirical reality behind the phenomenon in depth, detailed and thoroughly. Therefore, the use of qualitative approach in this research is to match between the empirical realities with the theory that applies to the use their descriptive method. According to Keirl and Moleong Miller (2004), qualitative research is a particular tradition in social science that is fundamentally dependent on observation in humans on its own, and connects with the people in their local language and its terms.

Qualitative research methods are methods used to examine the condition of natural objects, where researchers are as a key instrument, data collection techniques are combined, the data analysis is inductive qualitative research results, and more emphasis on generalization of meaning. The consideration of qualitative research, authors use this as expressed by Lexy Moleong (1991):

- a) Qualitative method is easier to customize what confronted with the reality.
- b) This indirect method is the nature of the relationship between researchers and respondents.
- c) This method more sensitive and conform to the influence of a joint against the value of management patterns that must be faced.

Therefore, qualitative research assumes that all knowledge is relative, that there is a subjective element to all knowledge and research, and that holistic, ungeneralisable studies are justifiable (an ungeneralisable study is one in which the insights and outcomes

generated by research cannot be applied to contexts or situations beyond those in which the data were collected). (Nunan, D. 1992). In metaphorical terms qualitative research is “soft”.

Descriptive research studying the problems in society, as well as the procedures applicable in the community as well as particular situations, including about relationships, activities, attitudes, outlooks, as well as the processes that are being conducted and the influences of a phenomenon.

Based on the characteristics of this research and the attention focused to study, then the theoretical mentioned by Meltzer, Petras, and Reynold is phenomenology (Bogdan and Biklen, 1990: 31) that all qualitative researchers in certain ways reflect the phenomenological perspective. It means that all researchers will try to understand hard about certain condition and what kind of interaction which suitable for people to become as well as possible. Particularly in research to understand what is the meaning of events and interactions for people can be in certain situations.

Method of Investigation

Here the writer is going to use the descriptive qualitative research to conduct this study. Since this study needs some analytical requirements, so that the deep analysis about resources which come from many sources of the objects; fully needed to expand the explanation later on.

He will find many sources which relate to the problems stated in previous chapter. It is needed because again, the condition needed to create deep analyses which make some assumption deeper and narrow. Moreover, this research involves identifying and locating sources that factual information or personal / expert opinion on a research question; necessary component of every other research method at some points.

Procedure of Collecting Data

In this research, an approach that is done is through a qualitative approach. It means data are not collected by numbers, but the data derived from the manuscript interview a record of the ground, personal documents, field notes and other formal document. So the purpose of this qualitative study was to describe the empirical reality behind the phenomenon in depth, detailed and thoroughly. Therefore the use of qualitative approach, this research is to match between the empirical reality with the theory that applies to the use their descriptive method.

In conducting his research, the writer will do some following procedures as follows:

1. Participatory observation
2. Questionnaire
3. Documentation

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Based on the result of the questionnaires which were given the students, we can see the following responses as stated below:

The Description of Learning Characteristics of the TBI Students on 2A

First, there was 11.20% students of A class TBI FITK UIN Walisongo Semarang categorized into visual learners. It was seen from the tendency of how they study English by such a following points: 1) Mind sometimes strays during verbal activities. 2) Observes rather than talks or acts. 3) They are well-organized in approach to tasks. 4) They like to read a lot. 5) They usually a good speller. 6) They always memorize by seeing graphics and pictures. 7) They do not too distractible. 8) Sometimes, find verbal insinuations difficulties. 9) They have good handwriting. 10) They easily remember someone faces. 11) Students usually use advanced planning. 12) They like doodling a lot. 13) Sometimes they quiet by nature. 14) Students are so meticulous and neat in appearances. 15) Therefore, they always notice in every detail.

Second, on the other hand, there was a 16.02% student at this classroom identified as audio-lingual or auditory ones. These characteristics can be taken from the following explanations: 1) Students talk to self aloud by the way. 2) They enjoy talking to each other. 3) They also tend to easily distracted by their surrounding actually. This condition makes them inconvenient for studying. Otherwise, they have good achievement however. 4) Most of them have more difficulties with written directions. They have to pay extra concentration to follow the direction which is given from teachers in the classroom. 5) This kind of students tend to enjoy listening materials which is read by teachers. Teachers should pay more efforts to make their students understand about their subjects. 6) Memorizing by steps in a sequence in the classroom a lot. 7) Students really do like music, and they enjoy it much. 8) It sounds funny but it is truly happened that students of auditory learners often whispering to self while reading. 9) They are easily in memorizing someone's faces. 10) Just like point number 3 that students are easily distracted by some surrounding noise. 12) Again, students in this type really like humming or singing. 13) Last but not least, they do like listening activities.

Third, the next characteristic is kinaesthetic one. It can be seen that in this classroom; students who have kinaesthetic one approximately almost 5%. The kinaesthetic characteristic can be seen from the following things, they are as follows: 1) Students like much about physical rewards. They like to do something rather than others activities. 2) We may see that students seem to be busy with their motion most of the time. 3) They also like to touch people when talking to others. Their gesture is very dominant in doing communication all the time. 4) Students often make taping pencils on the tables or foot while studying. 5) Therefore, we often meet students who enjoy their activities inside or outside in the classroom then. 6) Reading is not their priority for them, because reading makes them inconvenient much. They do not move around, so that they can feel enjoyable a lot. 7) When teacher asks them to spell or read aloud; it will make them nervous just because sometime they have bad pronunciations. Besides, they are bad speller. 8) Therefore, students like to solve their problems by physically working amongst others. 9) They also have a strong motivation, so that they will try something new and 10) they have favorite activities outside of the classroom. 11) If they have problems, it can be seen from their emotion which is expressed through physical means. 12) They always use hands while talking to others. 13) They wear dresses for comfort. Last but not least 14) Students like handling objects. Fourth, the rest of the students who have different characteristic are 14.11% in the classroom. There are a huge number of students who have various kind of learning characteristics however.

The Description of Learning Characteristics of the TBI Students on 2B

Based on the result of the questionnaires which were given the students, we can see the following responses as stated below:

First, there were 13% students of B class TBI FITK UIN Walisongo Semarang categorized into visual learners. It was seen from the tendency of how they study English by such a following points: 1) Mind sometimes strays during verbal activities. 2) Observes rather than talks or acts. 3) They are well-organized in approach to tasks. 4) They like to read a lot. 5) They usually a good speller. 6) They always memorize by seeing graphics and pictures. 7) They do not too distractible. 8) Sometimes, find verbal inunctions difficulties. 9) They have good handwriting. 10) They easily remember someone faces. 11) Students usually use advanced planning. 12) They like doodling a lot. 13) Sometimes they quiet by nature. 14) Students are so meticulous and neat in appearances. 15) Therefore, they always notice in every detail.

Second, on the other hand, there was 11% student at this classroom identified as audio-lingual or auditory ones. These characteristics can be taken from the following explanations: 1) Students talk to self aloud by the way. 2) They enjoy talking to each other. 3) They also tend to easily distracted by their surrounding actually. This condition makes them inconvenient for studying. Otherwise, they have good achievement however. 4) Most of them have more difficulties with written directions. They have to pay extra concentration to follow the direction which is given by the teachers in the classroom. 5) This kind of students tend to enjoy listening materials which is read by teachers. Teachers should pay more efforts to make their students understand about their subjects. 6) Memorizing by steps in a sequence in the classroom a lot. 7) Students really do like music, and they enjoy it much. 8) It sounds funny but it is truly happed that students of auditory learners often whispering to self while reading. 9) They are easily in memorizing someone's faces. 10) Just like point number 3 that students are easily distracted by some surrounding noise. 12) Again, students in this type really like humming or singing. 13) Last but not least, they do like listening activities.

Third, the next characteristic is kinaesthetic one. It can be seen that in this classroom; students who have kinaesthetic one approximately almost 6.72%. The kinaesthetic characteristic can be seen from the following things, they are as follows: 1) Students like much about physical rewards. They like to do something rather than others activities. 2) We may see that students seem to be busy with their motion most of the time. 3) They also like to touch people when talking to others. Their gesture is very dominant in doing communication all the time. 4) Students often make tapping pencils on the tables or foot while studying. 5) Therefore, we often meet students who enjoy their activities inside or outside in the classroom then. 6) Reading is not their priority for them, because reading makes them inconvenient much. They do not to move around so that they can feel enjoyable a lot. 7) When teacher asks them to spell or read aloud; it will make them nervous just because sometime they have bad pronunciations. Besides, they are bad speller. 8) Therefore, students like to solve their problems by physically working amongst others. 9) They also have a strong motivation so that they will try something new and 10) they have favorite activities outside of the classroom. 11) If they have problems, it can be seen from their emotion which is expressed through physical means. 12) They always use hands while talking to others. 13) They wear dresses for comfort. Last but not least 14) Students like handling objects.

Fourth, the rest of the students who has different characteristic are 13.72% in the classroom. There are a huge number of students who have various kind of learning characteristics however.

The Description of Learning Characteristics of the TBI Students on 2C

There were 35 students who did the questionnaire. The rest of the students did not attend in the classroom when the questionnaire had taken unfortunately. Students gave check (V) according to the appropriate selection which was given on the check list above. Each student has to responsible with his/her choice as well. It is important because the researcher wanted to know the real condition of students' learning styles characteristics in the classroom. There are forty five items which should be chosen by the students in determining their learning styles characteristics based on the following table above.

Based on the result of the questionnaires which is given the students, we can see some following responses stated below:

First, there were 12% students of C class TBI FITK UIN Walisongo Semarang categorized into visual learners. It was seen from the tendency of how they study English by such a following points: 1) Mind sometimes strays during verbal activities. 2) Observes rather than talks or acts. 3) They are well-organized in approach to tasks. 4) They like to read a lot. 5) They usually a good speller. 6) They always memorize by seeing graphics and pictures. 7) They do not too distractible. 8) Sometimes, find verbal insinuations difficulties. 9) They have good handwriting. 10) They easily remember someone faces. 11) Students usually use advanced planning. 12) They like doodling a lot. 13) Sometimes they quiet by nature. 14) Students are so meticulous and neat in appearances. 15) Therefore, they always notice in every detail.

Second, on the other hand, there was 11,17% student at this classroom identified as audiolingual or auditory ones. These characteristics can be taken from the following explanations: 1) Students talk to self aloud by the way. 2) They enjoy talking to each other. 3) They also tend to easily distracted by their surrounding actually. This condition makes them inconvenient for studying. Otherwise, they have good achievement however. 4) Most of them have difficulties more with written directions. They have to pay extra concentration to follow the direction which is given from teachers in the classroom. 5) This kind of students tends to enjoy listening materials which is read by teachers. Teachers should pay more efforts to make their students understand about their subjects. 6) Memorizing by steps in a sequence in the classroom a lot. 7) Students really do like music, and they enjoy it much. 8) It sounds funny but it is truly happed that students of auditory

learners often whispering to self while reading. 9) They are easily in memorizing someone's faces. 10) Just like point number 3 that students are easily distracted by some surrounding noise. 12) Again, students in this type really like humming or singing. 13) Last but not least, they do like listening activities.

Third, the next characteristic is kinaesthetic one. It can be seen that in this classroom; students who have kinaesthetic one approximately almost 7,25%. The kinaesthetic characteristic can be seen from the following things, they are as follows: 1) Students like much about physical rewards. They like to do something rather than others activities. 2) We may see that students seem to be busy with their motion most of the time. 3) They also like to touch people when talking to others. Their gesture is very dominant in doing communication all the time. 4) Students often make tapping pencils on the tables or foot while studying. 5) Therefore, we often meet students who enjoy their activities inside or outside in the classroom then. 6) Reading is not their priority for them, because reading makes them inconvenient much. They do not to move around so that they can feel enjoyable a lot. 7) When teacher asks them to spell or read aloud; it will make them nervous just because sometime they have bad pronunciations. Besides, they are bad speller. 8) Therefore, students like to solve their problems by physically working amongst others. 9) They also have a strong motivation so that they will try something new and 10) they have favorite activities outside of the classroom. 11) If they have problems, it can be seen from their emotion which is expressed through physical means. 12) They always use hands while talking to others. 13) They wear dresses for comfort. Last but not least 14) Students like handling objects.

Fourth, the rest of the students who have different characteristic are 14% in the classroom. There are a huge number of students who have various kind of learning characteristics however.

General Findings

Based on the findings really on every classes, we can see that there are various characteristics of students' learning styles. The writer categorized them into some four major points, such as: visual, audiolingual, kinesthetic and others ones. Therefore, having known these characteristics appear at every classes, so that the writer would recommend to the lecturers who teach the TBI classes of EFL students of Tarbiyah faculty of UIN Walisongo Semarang on second semester for doing some following points. They are as follows:

First, regarding to the description of class 2A which there are 11.2% visual students, 16.02% of audiolingual, 5% kinesthetic and the rest 14.11% are others, would use multimedia which available in the classroom. Whereas, the description of class 2B has shown that 13% students are visual learners, 11% audiolingual learners, 6.72% kinesthetic and the rest 13,72% are others. Then, in 2C class the students of there are 12% visual learners, 11.17% audiolingual, 7.25 kinesthetic and the rest 14% others.

The multimedia would help students to understand every subject easily. Otherwise, students would have many problems in teaching-learning process unfortunately. The use of multimedia takes the important roles in every teaching-learning process, because it would make the process of teaching-learning more interesting, enjoyable, effective and efficient.

Besides, the lecturers no need to spend much time for giving explanation orally, on the other hand, multimedia will presenting pictures, graphs or sounds that make the subjects look like the real one. Consequently that students may feel his feeling influenced in every subjects. Students only need pay their attention on the slide and listening to the lecturers' explanation to get better understanding. In the last session lecturers give some instruction to make some assessments.

Moreover, it is important for the education institution in take account of the teaching-learning facilities as well. Otherwise, teachers will face any problems in delivering their subjects. Multimedia is one of the answers about this problem however. The use of multimedia may have positive effects in fostering student's achievement for instance.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTION

Based on the explanation above the writer concludes that, regarding to the descriptions of class 2A which there are 11.2% visual students, 16.02% of audio-lingual, 5% kinaesthetic and the rest 14.11% are others, would use multimedia which available in the classroom. Whereas, the descriptions of 2B class have shown that 13% students are visual learners, 11% audiolingual learners, 6.72% kinaesthetic and the rest 13,72% are others. Then, in 2C class the students of there are 12% visual learners, 11.17% audiolingual, 7.25 kinaesthetic and the rest 14% others.

In the future, we hope that there will be other researchers which may develop from the previous research. By this, There are lots of researchers have regularly identified aspects of learning and created new terms and instruments, which is no doubt an indication of the complexity of the learning process. As others build on and modify that "field" becomes wider and less focused; consequently, the result of the research are more

confusing for teachers and students to apply. There can be optimistic in hopping a valid and reliable learning styles in classroom make students “profiles” are more clearly defined. It is probably, that students profiles become common place, the risk would be high. Students might be stereotyped, or students might pigeonhole themselves, thus limiting their learning potential and success.

Thus, the expectation of the students’ development of their capabilities in the classroom is so much expected. Parents, especially, always keep their attention toward children academic improvements. Most of them almost not realize that every child has their own learning characteristics. The question of how and where they may improve their learning capabilities are still become parents’ curiosity. Implementing of multiple intelligences is one the method to solve educational problems in the future.

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