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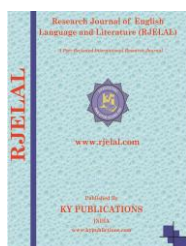INDIA

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DIVERSE LEARNING STYLES USED BY ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

Learning styles are not really concerned with "what" learners learn, but rather "how" they prefer to learn. Learners' academic achievements. Learners have different strengths and preferences in the ways they process the information which means they have different learning styles. This quantitative study examines the different learning styles utilized by the learners in learning English Language. The sample of the study involved 160 learners from Masa College in Klang Valley, Malaysia. For the purpose of data collection, the researchers used Likert Scale Questionnaire which included thirty questions regarding different learning styles that the learners used in learning English Language .The results of the study demonstrated that 95% of learners prefer to learn English Language best through imagination. The findings of the study also showed that 77% of the learners disagreed to do individual tasks in English Language due to lack of ideas and coaching to complete a project. They preferred to work in groups in order to improve their knowledge and understanding on certain topics via sharing experiences and thoughts.

Keywords: Diversity, Learning style, English Language,

INTRODUCTION

The term "learning styles" refers to the various ways of learning that each learner utilizes differently. In other words, learning styles differ from one individual to another. Most people prefer an identifiable method of interacting with, taking in, and processing stimuli or information. Based on this concept, the idea of individualized "learning styles" originated in the 1970s, and acquired enormous popularity (Pashler, McDaniel, Rohrer, and Bjork. 2008). "Today that tradition belief, the learning differences are arising of intelligence differences and different cognitive abilities has been changed and it is verified that learning differences are arises of intelligence differences and other factors such as personality characteristics, task difficulty, and learning styles (Emamepur& Shams, 2007;

Yolmaz&Orhan, 2010, cited in Jahanbakhsh 2010, pp1030)". According to Mei, (2018)every educator has elements of every teaching style in the model but in varying degrees.

James and Gardner (1995) believe that learning styles is the conditions that enables learners to percept, process, storage, and recall the learning contents. Pierce (2000) stated that learning style is the method that people prefer it over those other methods in learning such as learning in school. It is necessary that lecturers, school managers, and other members of instructional team take to account differences of learning styles of students. In addition, Hargadon (2010) found that lecturers should pay attention to learning differences of students and because of these differences, lecturers must use different methods of teaching in order

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their students can gain better performances. According toBogamuwa, (2017) there are several factors that account for learner differences and among these factors learning style plays a major role.

In addition, recent research suggests that the style by which one learner applies knowledge is an important characteristic to be considered in the aggregate educational processes (Graf, Lin, &Kinshuk, 2008). Learning styles are generally considered as characteristics, cognitive, affective, and psychological behaviours that serve as relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive, interact with, and respond to a learning environment. Dunn & Dunn (2006) defined a learning style as the way in which learner begins to concentrate on process, absorb, and retain new and difficult information or skills. They came up with the Dunn Model which identifies three learning styles, namely; auditory, visual, and tactile/kinaesthetic.The objective of this study is to examine the different learning styles utilized by the learners in learning English Language. Although the learners have learnt English language before, most of them still have hard challenges and difficulties because they lack adequate practice opportunities. For example, according to statistical analysis, the TOEFL-iBT scores of Malaysian students range in the bottom quarter of all Asian countries (ETS, 2015). Apart from that, the results help the leaners to experience other modes of learning which enhance their performance. Furthermore, the results help the learners to understand their own learning styles and hence enhance the way they acquire knowledge. In order to realise the importance in determining students' learning styles, and to accommodate for different learning styles in the classrooms, students should complete a learning style instrument early in the course (Mulalic 2018).

Jha-Thakur (2009) defined learning style as the manner on which combination of physical, psychological, emotional, sociological, and environmental factors affect an individuals' ability to perceive, interact with, and respond to the learning environment, which is often used in special education. Despite the different definitions, Jha-Thakur (2009) classified learners into different categories in order to study the individuals' learning

differences.Hamachek (2000) stated that each individual develops a style or preference for approaching new learning. He outlined three general learning style named; visual (reading), aural (listening), and physical (actively doing things). Some learners learn best by listening to the lectures or discussions; other find their learning is facilitated by reading, reviewing notes, and scanning books while others learn more through active physical involvement such as performing experiments rather than reading about them (Hamachek, 2000). In visual learning style, learners prefer to process information by seeing it. They like to receive information from pictures, graphs and visual media (Dunn & Dunn, 2006). These learners frequently close their eyes to reassemble a picture of what they are trying to remember. During a lecture or classroom discussions, visual learners often prefer to take detailed notes to absorb information. In Tactile/Kinesthetic learning style, learners are willing to stay active in the learning process. They tend to learn better when thy have the opportunity to touch or manipulate in some way (Dunn & Dunn, 2006). Role play, field trips, and movement activities can accommodate kinaesthetic learners. In this sense, learners may find it hard to sit in the classroom for long periods and may become distracted by their needs for activity and exploration.

Farrant, (2012) believesthat learners can learn either deductively or inductively. Deductive learning that describes the process by which a learner is presented with a general principle and applies number several tests to it to discover whether it is true or not. Inductive learning involves the process of learning by example where a system tries to induce a general rule from a set of observed instances.The three learning styles identified in the Dunn model (Dunn & Dunn, 2006) link well with the learning styles identified by Farrant (2002) and Hamacheck (2000). These researchers categorized learners into different learning styles although differently stratified. According to Farrant (2012) and Hamacheck (2000), some learners prefer to read rather than listen, work alone rather than in groups, find things out for themselves rather than being given summaries by the teacher and some like to have tasks tightly prescribed rather than left to their

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own decision making.Kolb developed the learning styles inventory from his Experiential Theory Model (Kolb. 1984) in which he emphasized that learning is a dialectic process integrating experience and concept as well as observations and action which occur in all kinds of settings and encompass all life stages. According to Jha-Thakur (2009) learning involves the integrated functioning of thinking, feeling, perceiving, and behaving as well as communications between the person and the environment. In order to maximise an individual's own personal learning, each learner should understand his/her learning style and seek out opportunities to learn as learning styles are not fixed traits but can be changed and adapted accordingly in different situations and learning contexts.

It is worth noting that Kolb's theory is grounded in the experiential Model of Kurt Lewin which postulates for learning processes or modes. The first mode involves concrete experiences. Kolb (1984) described this mode as "the focal point for learning, giving life, texture, and subjective personal meaning to abstract concepts and at the same time, providing a concrete, publicly shared reference point for testing the implications and validity of ideas created during the learning processes". Concrete experience is followed by a period of reflection and observation which leads to abstract conceptualization. The fourth mode of learning is active experimentation in which abstract concepts are tested and applied to the learning situation. The learner grasps their experimentation as a new level of concrete experience, and the learning process continues in a circular fashion as follows:
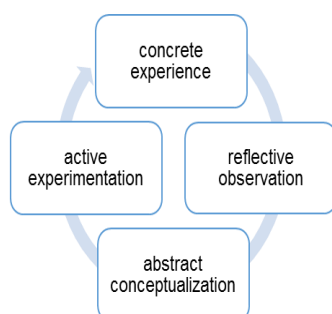

Figure 1: Experiential learning cycle. From Kolb, 1984

Materials and Method

This quantitative study used an experimental design. The participants for this study were 160 Diploma students in batch 30 and 33 who were enrolled in English subject in a college in Klang Valley, Malaysia. The researchers use simple random sampling to select the learners from four different faculties. The researchers used simple random sampling procedure to select the sample of 2 Batches (63) learners for this study from the population. The researchers used Likert Scale Questionnaire (LSQ) in order to collect data for the purpose of this study.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Kolb's learning styles inventory aimed to find out about the learners' details regarding their learning styles.
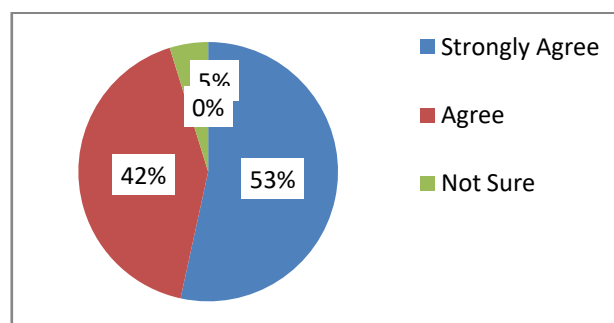

Figure 2: Question 17: I learn English Language best when imagining things.

From question seventeen, the researchers found out that 95% of learners strongly agreed that they prefer to learn English Language best when imagining things. However, 5% of the learners did not answerthe question. It can be clearly seen (Figure 2) that the learners prefer to imagine things.
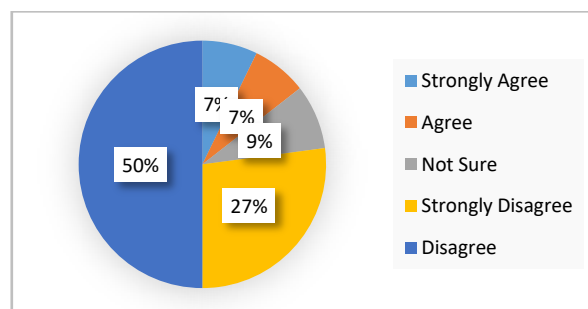

Figure 3: Question 23: I like individual work in English Language.

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Based on the data obtained from question twenty-three, the researchers found out that 77% of learners strongly disagreed toparticipate in individual activities in English Language Course. They preferred to work in groups in order to improve their knowledge and understanding on certain topics via sharing experiences and thoughts. However, it is worth mentioning that 14% of learners preferredindividual tasks rather than group works. They found it more convenient and productive for one to concentrate on an activity individually.They believe that interruptions will be reduced when the learners complete a task individually.

CONCLUSION

From the results of this study, it can be concluded that incorporating the learners' learning styleshad a positive influence on the learners' learning performances. It is recommended that English Language lecturers should be familiar with knowledge and skills of dealing with different learners' learning styles and incorporate them in teaching English Language Skill.Learning styles should be used both to teach and reinforce English Language concepts. For instance, English Language lecturer should use some linguistic approaches such as a providing short stories about language in order to enhance learners' understanding. Theresults of this study revealed that learners hadvarious learning styles to learn English Language which led them to enhance their learning in the English Languageclassrooms. Moreover, the findings indicated that the learners' field of study, gender, and ethnic background did not appear to influence the students' learning styles preferences.

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Appendix A: Learners' Learning Style Inventory

Instructions: Tick (√) in the appropriate column in the right, based on how much you agree or disagree with item.

Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I learn English Language best when I work alone.					
I learn English Language best when I join groups.					
I learn English Language best when I manipulate the materials.					
I learn English Language best when I look at pictures					
I learn English Language best when I explore types of letters.					
I learn English Language best when I hear to the lecturer.					
I learn English Language best when I follow (pursue) my interests.					
I learn English Language best when I organise materials myself.					
I like doing circular letter in English Language.					
I learn English Language letters best when I work alone.					
I learn English Language best when I work alone.					
I learn best by working with abstract. e.g. start working from simple to complex.					
I learn English Language best by interacting with space e.g. moving around the class checking how others have done their work.					
I learn English Language projects best when I work alone.					
I learn English Language best when I know where I will use the content I learned in college.					
I learn English Language best by comparing myself to others.					
I learn English Language best when imagining things.					
I learn English Language best when working in a small group.					
I learn English Language when creating models.					
I am good at problem solving skills in English Language.					
I like communication method in English Language.					
I am good at physical activities in English Language.					
I like individual work in English Language.					
I am good at building puzzles in English Language.					

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I am good at understanding myself in English Language.					
I like to learn English Language with a lot of friends.					
I am good at understanding others in English Language.					
I like to ask questions in English Language.					
I like small group discussion in English Language.					
I learn English Language best when I do many activities.					

Adapted from Kolb, A.D (2005). **Learning Styles Inventory- version 3.1**

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