

A Study on Learning Styles among Arabic Language Students at Universiti Teknologi Mara, Malacca Campus

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Abstract: This article discusses a survey on the learning styles of Arabic Language students at the Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM), Malacca Campus based on the four learning styles as proposed by Honey and Mumford, namely Activist, Theorist, Reflector and Pragmatist. The objective of this study is to investigate whether or not a similarity or significant difference exists in the learning styles of respondents between gender and the academic program. Some 175 respondents participated in this survey with the descriptive statistical analysis and inference done using data from questionnaires. Data was analyzed using the IBM SPSS 20 software, and t-test of two independent samples was applied for inferential statistics. Results have shown that there was no significant difference in the learning styles between genders. This survey also found that there was no significant difference between students of Business Studies Diploma program and those of the Diploma in Hospitality and Tourism Studies.

Keywords: Learning style, Activist, Theorist, Reflector, Pragmatist

I. INTRODUCTION

Learning style has been identified as an influential factor in the academic achievement of individuals. Studies in the West identified four learning styles as in the Honey and Mumford's model, namely Activist, Reflector, Theorist and Pragmatist [1]. Learning style is simply defined as a collective of attitude and behavior which determine the learning approach or method favored by an individual [2]. As individuals differ in their habit and views in certain conditions, so do their learning styles [3]. Research by Mooney and Price (in [4]) discovered that problems faced by students of institutions of higher learning were mostly related to that students did not know effective learning and could not give a good attention during learning. In general, learning styles of students differ from each other and so do their academic results. The problem of applying an effective and suitable learning styles often occur among new students at higher education institutions. Many of them are not even aware of suitable learning style to apply in the learning process. Knowing the correct learning style to apply can directly assist students to plan effective strategies in their learning process.

II. PROBLEM STATEMENT

According to Horwood [5], Asian students performed less well when instructions were auditory. A study by Hodges [6] in American secondary schools found that 90% of teaching in traditional classes was more auditory-oriented. Dunn, Dunn and Price [7] also estimated that around 90% of learning instructions in classes were given through lectures and question-and-answer sessions (auditory).

Previous researches have shown that students perform better if they were exposed to various learning models and techniques, a fact which received less emphasis from lecturers. This argument is strengthened by Sarena [8] who stated that the Malaysian education system has yet to focus on the technical aspects of formal learning. This is supported by Siti Hawa [9] who found that students' awareness on the use of effective learning skills was still at a low level. In fact, Sarena [8] argued that students learnt learning techniques and skills by chance, indirectly, or following the trend of their peers.

In Malaysia, studies on the use of Honey and Mumford's model [2] are still not prevalent in institutions of higher learning. Observation on the learning styles of students is crucial in the education process. Differences in the learning styles and their implications on learning must also be analyzed. Therefore, this study is necessary to investigate students' preference of learning styles as defined by the model.

III. OBJECTIVE AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The objective of this study is to investigate whether or not there exists a similarity or significant difference between the learning styles of respondents of different gender and academic program who are Arabic language students based on the model proposed by Honey and Mumford [2]. This study attempts to answer the following questions:

- 3.1 To what extent is the learning style different between the gender groups of the respondents?
- 3.2 To what extent is the learning style different based on their academic programs?

IV. HYPOTHESES

Based on the objective of the study, these hypotheses were constructed to analyze the existence of similarity or difference in learning styles according to gender and the respondent's academic program:

- 4.1 There is no significant difference in learning styles between males and females.
- 4.2 There is no significant difference in learning styles between students of Business Studies Program and those of Hospitality and Tourism Program.

V. METHODOLOGY

The research was carried out using a survey. A population of 320 students pursuing the Diploma in Business Studies and Diploma in Hospitality and Tourism at the Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Malacca Branch. Out of that number, a sample of 175 students was randomly selected and this sample size was determined based on the model by Krejcie and Morgan (in [10]).

To answer the research questions, a questionnaire was used as an instrument in this study. The questionnaire was revised to facilitate data entry for analysis using an IBM SPSS 20 software to acquire descriptive and inferential statistics. The mean values, percentage, frequency and standard deviations were obtained while t-Tests on two independent samples were done for statistical inference.

VI. DEMOGRAPHY OF RESPONDENTS

Analysis of results has shown the following demography of respondents: 111 female students, 64 male students. A total of 80 students were in the Diploma of Business Studies program who enrolled in BAB101 Arabic Language I and BAB151 Arabic Language II, while a total of 95 students were in the Diploma of Hospitality and Tourism Program who were registered in BAB110 Arabic Language I and BAB120 Arabic Language II.

VII. DIFFERENCE IN LEARNING STYLES ACCORDING TO STUDENT'S GENDER

7.1 Research Question 1:

To what extent is the learning style different between the gender groups of the respondents?

This section discusses the results of data analysis on the difference of learning styles between genders of Arabic language students at UiTM, Malacca Campus. T-tests on two independent samples were done. Results have shown that both male and female students exhibited all learning styles in their learning activities.

Table 1: Significant difference between male and female students based on their learning styles

Learning Style	t-test			Mean	
	t	df	Sig.(2-Tailed)	Male	Female
Activist	-1.455	173	0.147	4.03	4.14
Reflektor	0.859	173	0.391	4.12	4.07
Theorist	-1.150	173	0.252	4.13	4.21
Pragmatist	0.89	173	0.929	4.07	4.06

The null hypothesis H_0 (1) was accepted indicating that for all four learning styles, Activist, Reflector, Theorist and Pragmatist, there was no significant difference between the genders. The p-values for all four learning styles were greater than 0.05. That clearly shows that sex do not influence the Activist, Reflector, Theorist and Pragmatist learning styles of the students in their daily learning routine.

It can be concluded from the t-test that difference in gender do not influence the learning style of a student. Shahbuddin and Rohizani [11] stated that this is due to the students feeling their style of learning suits themselves. The similarity in the learning styles between male and female students was due to the form and requirement of the curriculum contained in the subjects taken.

VIII. DIFFERENCE IN LEARNING STYLES BETWEEN ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

8.1 Research Question 2:

To what extent is the learning style different based on the respondent's academic program?

This section discusses the analysis of the survey results which investigate the learning style difference between two academic programs; namely the Diploma in Business Studies Program and the Diploma in Hospitality and Tourism Program. Data was analyzed using the Independent two sample t-test. Results have shown that students of both programs exercised all the four learning styles in their daily learning activities. Results also supported that the null hypothesis H_0 (2) was accepted as there was no significant difference for all four learning styles. The p-values obtained for all four learning styles were greater than 0.05. This proved that the academic programs did not influence the learning styles of the student.

Table 2: Significant difference between diploma students of Business Studies and Hospitality & Tourism based on their learning styles

Learning Style	t-test			Mean	
	t	df	Sig.(2-Tailed)	Business Studies	Hospitality and Tourism
Activist	1.267	173	0.207	4.15	4.06
Reflector	1.786	173	0.076	4.15	4.04
Theorist	1.774	173	0.078	4.24	4.13
Pragmatist	1.453	173	0.148	4.12	4.02

Based on results of the survey, there was no significant difference between the two programs with regards to the students' learning styles. This was due to the fact that all of them were located at the same campus and therefore were going through the same learning environment. This survey provided a proof for the argument that the students of both programs at the UiTM Malacca Campus had similar learning styles.

IX. CONCLUSION

This survey found that students who were taking Diploma in Business Studies and Diploma in Hospitality and Tourism adopted all learning styles in the learning of Arabic language at UiTM, Malacca Branch. Overall, students had more than one style of learning. They, however, must evaluate the strength and weakness of their learning style to ensure better level of acceptance in the learning process. Those who managed to identify their tendency for a certain type of learning style could try to apply the learning style to learn something new. However, if they prefer their existing learning style, they would find that the learning process easier and quicker. This study also noted the importance of lecturers being aware of the different learning styles. Apart from students' learning styles, teaching styles of the lecturers also play an important role in helping to raise academic performance of the students. Therefore, with the existence of similarity and differences in the teaching and learning styles of the lecturers and the students, respectively, subject delivery can be done effectively thus increasing the level of understanding by the students in the learning process.

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