Varying Teaching Styles for Learning Styles Differences

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Abstract   The aim of this research was to investigate teachers' teaching styles variation as a way to solve problems related to students' learning styles differences during teaching and learning process. The research was a type of qualitative research describing the phenomenon of teachers' ways to vary their teaching styles. This study was conducted in IAIN Padangsidimpuan toward a teacher teaching in a classroom consisting of 26 students. To collect the data, questioners were given to students; interview and observation were given to teacher. Then, descriptive data analysis was implemented in analyzing the data that were collected. The research found that from the 26 students, 6 students are visual learners, 8 students are audio learners, 2 students are verbal learners and 10 students are kinesthetic learners. In relation to teachers' teaching styles variation, it was seen that almost all of the teachers' teaching styles were directed to fulfill all the needs of students' styles differences. Particularly, the dominant teaching styles were suitable for kinesthetic learners and this is good because most of the students are regarded as kinesthetic. However, the teacher also could vary her teaching to meet all learning styles.

Keywords: Learning Styles; Teaching Styles; Variation; Learning Process; Teaching Process

Abstrak   Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menyelidiki variasi gaya mengajar guru sebagai cara untuk menyelesaikan masalah yang berkaitan dengan perbedaan gaya belajar siswa selama proses belajar mengajar. Penelitian ini adalah jenis penelitian kualitatif yang menggambarkan fenomena cara guru untuk memvariasikan gaya mengajar mereka. Penelitian ini dilakukan di IAIN Padangsidimpuan terhadap pengajaran guru di kelas yang terdiri dari 26 siswa. Untuk mengumpulkan data, kuesioner diberikan kepada siswa; wawancara dan observasi diberikan kepada guru. Kemudian, analisis data deskriptif diimplementasikan dalam menganalisis data yang dikumpulkan. Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa dari 26 siswa, 6 siswa adalah pembelajar visual, 8 siswa adalah pelajar audio, 2 siswa pembelajar verbal dan 10 siswa pembelajar kinestetik. Sehubungan dengan variasi gaya mengajar guru, terlihat bahwa hampir semua gaya mengajar guru diarahkan untuk memenuhi semua kebutuhan perbedaan gaya siswa. Khususnya, gaya mengajar yang dominan cocok untuk pelajar kinestetik dan ini bagus karena sebagian besar siswa dianggap sebagai kinestetik. Namun, guru juga dapat memvariasikan pengajarannya untuk memenuhi semua gaya belajar.

Kata Kunci: Gaya Belajar; Gaya Mengajar; Variasi; Proses Belajar; Proses Mengajar

 INTRODUCTION

According to Felder (2005), students usually have their own styles in learning, and those styles can be seen from many learning aspects, skills, and encouragement. There is also an assumption arguing that the teachers should vary the ways of teaching to fulfill the needs for students' differences in learning because the ways of teaching really influence students' learning interest in the classroom (Dunn and Dunn, 1993). Then Stebbin (1995) and Miller (2001) in Kazu (2009) perceive that varying teaching styles is a way to match students' learning styles with teaching styles.

There are many definitions of learning styles which are proposed by some experts. The first, Oxpord (2003) says that learning style is a usual term for "global or analytic, auditory or visual that students have in learning a new language or in learning any other subjects". Then, Brown (2003) thinks that learning styles are "person's personality and cognition showing the tendencies and preferences which differentiate the person from another person". In relation to types of learning styles, there are many kinds of learning styles that will be discussed in this article.

Dunn and Dunn (1979) promoted a category of learning styles called "learning channels or modalities". It is categorized into some categories i.e. VAK which stands for "visual, auditory, kinesthetic and tactile". This study focused on four of them i.e. Visual, Audio, and Kinesthetic. In addition, David Kolb (1984) also promotes some types of learning styles. He thinks that the better learning process have four different abilities; "ability to think something concrete, ability to observe and see something, ability to think abstract concept and knowledge, and ability to do something real and practical". Further, he created a learning style category which" can place people or students in some categories i.e. abstract action and conceptualization and concrete action, active experimentation, and visual observation".

Since the students tend to have different learning styles, the teachers should have actions that can meet the demand for those differences. One of the ways that can be implemented is by varying the teachers' teaching styles. However, to solve the problems related to learning differences is not as easy as what the teachers think. Consequently, there is still tendency for teachers to apply traditional method of teaching, in which the teachers only prefer certain styles of teaching such as giving lots of spoken explanation rather than giving supported media like pictures and hand on practices, and real media in the classroom.

Talking about teaching styles, some definitions and types of teaching styles which are promoted by some experts and researchers are elaborated below. The first, Kaplan and Kies (1995) define teaching style as "teacher's actions as well as behavior when they teach in the

classroom including the ways of providing media and strategies". Then, in line with the previous definition, Grasha(1996) thinks it is similar to "teachers' individual qualities and characters" which are shown and in teaching and learning process. Looking at those definitions, what is meant by teaching styles in this research is in line with what have been stated previously, i.e. about teachers' behavior. However it is particularly directed to teachers' behavior and actions in facilitating, accommodating, and encouraging students' learning styles.

There are several researchers who have done research on the topic of teaching styles. One of them is Grasha (1996) who develops five types of teaching styles. They are: "(1) expert, which means that the teachers prefer to transfer knowledge and theory as a form of students' competences; (2) formal authority which means that the teachers tend to become a super king who handles everything during the lesson such as deciding the learning activities, developing the goals, and giving positive and negative feedback; (3) personal model which means that the teachers like to guide students, show them how to do things, and encourage students to learn; (4) facilitator which means that the teachers tend to develop students' activities in learning and provide the learning with interesting and effective learning media; (5) delegator which means the teachers lead the students to become independent as autonomous learners".

Talking about problems that happen in the context of State Institute for Islamic Studies (IAIN) Padangsidimpuan, lots of problems still happen in English teaching and learning process. One of the obligations directed to all students of first semester since 2015 is learning English. In fact, students from all first semester students from all faculties must study English from Monday to Friday. In other words, all students learn English for one year in which they attend one and a half hour learning English every day.

From the reality, there is an assumption that they get boredom during the lesson. Also it is predicted that the students face lots of problems during the lesson such as lack of motivation and interest, laziness and difficulties to adapt the English atmosphere. The Institute for Islamic Studies has done several ways to overcome the problems stated above. One of the ways was inviting IALF i.e. Indonesia Australia Language Foundation to give training and supervision for all English teachers in Language Development Center. This wass done in order that the teachers have better quality in teaching and add their experiences in the classroom. The ways of varying teaching styles to facilitate students' learning differences in learning English and of course to increase their motivations and interest as well as to avoid their boredom in learning English were aspects that the IALF has trained.

The implementation of this language learning system has run for about 4 years. However, some cases sometime still happen during the program. In one case, there are still possibilities of

teachers to teach out of track which means they still apply the traditional methods in their teaching. So that, supervision program to supervise the teachers was done by the Language Development Center. In other cases, the tendency of boring classroom and teaching method still happens. Thus, to avoid this problem, mentoring program in which the teachers are grouped and asked to share new ways, games, and strategies in teaching was done by the Language Development Center. In conclusion, there is always a solution that Language Development Center offers to solve every problem that happens in the field. Taking a look at the previous description, this study was conducted as a need to analyze the variations of teaching styles of teachers to match learning styles of students.

This study was done as a need to analyze the teaching actions specifically teacher's actions in varying teaching styles to meet the demand for students' learning differences. There are two research questions that guided this study to achieve its objectives stated before. The questions are what are types of students' learning styles in learning? And what how do the teacher vary her teaching styles to fulfill the students' learning styles differences?

Related to the topic in this study, there have been lots of people who did research on it. They are; Kara (2009) stated in Rambe (2015) investigated a case related to styles of learning and teaching cases. The study found "a mismatch between students' learning styles and teachers' teaching styles happened in the classroom and that mismatch affected students' failure, frustrations, and success". Then, Ghada (2011) investigated a case related to students' and teachers' styles preferences match and mismatch between them, and its impact on learning achievement. The result of the research showed that the mismatch happened between the teaching and learning styles of the teachers and students. Then, the result of mismatch created bad effect on students' learning outcome. Moreover, Juris (2009) conducted qualitative and quantitative research on learning and teaching crossroads. They investigated the learning styles of students and teachers and whether the teacher's style matched the student's learning styles, also the impact on students' motivation. Finally, they found that the kinesthetic style was the most prevalent followed by the tactile and then the auditory style. The finding also showed that there was a mismatch between students' and teachers' learning styles. That mismatch gave impact on students' motivation in the process of learning.

Regarding the background of problems stated before, this study was merely about an analysis as well as an investigation of teachers' teaching styles variation to match students' learning styles in English learning process. Then, this study focused an analysis not only about types of learning styles and teaching styles but also about how teachers teaching styles match

students' learning styles in learning process. Also, this research investigated the variations of teaching styles to match the students' learning styles.

METHOD

The concept of mix method (qualitative and quantitative principles) was applied in this study due to the objective which was to see how the teacher varies her teaching styles to fulfill students' learning styles differences. In analyzing data related to the categorizations and percentages of students' learning styles, quantitative research paradigm was applied. Then, in analyzing and elaborating the variations of teacher's actions or styles in qualitative principles was applied.

Talking about the population, the study was held in the context of first year students' of State Institute for Islamic Studies (IAIN) Padangsidimpuan. Then, a classroom chosen from the first year students of IAIN Padangsidimpuan became the participants or the samples of the study. There was an English teacher and about 26 students who learn English that were intensively observed to get the data. Therefore, the samples were an English teacher and 26 students and an English teacher.

The data were collected related to teachers' perceptions and actions related to teaching and learning styles. In terms of data collection technique, three types of method of data collection were applied in this study. They were: observation, survey, and interview. Thus, the techniques of data collection used were survey i.e. giving questionnaires, observation i.e. teacher's teaching styles observation, and interview i.e. written interview. When the data have been collected, then it was analyzed and elaborated based on the quantitative and qualitative principles of analyzing data. Categorization was used in analyzing the questionnaires; data elaboration and description were implemented in analyzing interview and observation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Two types of data are described in this part of the study. The data are about types of students' learning styles, and teachers' teaching styles variation. As stated before three types of data collection technique were used to get those types of data, questionnaires, observation, and interview. To know types of students' learning styles, questionnaires were given to students, and to know teachers' teaching styles variations, observation and interview were given to teachers. The detail explanations toward the data are elaborated below.

1. Students' Learning Styles Differences

This study found that from all numbers of students i.e. 26 students, 6 students are visual learners, 8 students are audio learners, 2 students are verbal learners and 10 students are kinesthetic learners. The percentage of students' learning styles can be seen in the chart below.
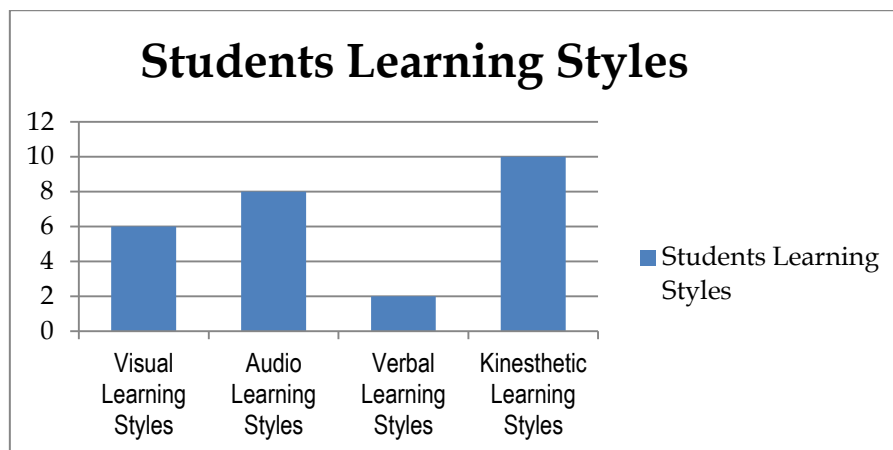

Chart 1. Students' Learning Styles

From the chart, it can be seen that the dominant styles that students prefer in learning is kinesthetic i.e. 10 students, followed with audio i.e. 8 students, visual i.e. 6 students, and verbal i.e. 2 students.

From the finding, it can be interpreted that most of students are regarded as kinesthetic learners. It means that they like learning by doing and practicing the actions in real context. Then, they also like if the teacher teaches by implementing games in which they can learn and move around as well as interact actively together with their friends. From this case, it also can be interpreted that most of the students prefer doing something meaningful for their real lives. In contrast, few of the students like learning from written and printed expression. It means that only a few students think that reading and writing is interesting for them. These kinds of students tend to prefer sitting in their chairs rather than interacting with their friends. This study has the same finding with Juris (2009) who found kinesthetic as the most favorable styles by the students.

2. Teachers' Teaching Styles Variations

To meet the demand for the students' learning styles differences which have been elaborated in the previous paragraph, it was found that the teacher could vary her teaching styles. Those teaching styles were found from the observation technique of data collection as well as from the interview. The data are described in detail description below.

In a term of expert teaching style which means transferring the knowledge and explaining theories, it was seen that the teacher favored and applied many spoken explanations and followed with some illustration written on the board. Then, there was a tendency that the teacher liked to ask students to discuss certain definition or theories in form of group work discussion which means the teacher asked the students to work in pairs and groups to discuss some theories related to tenses and other concepts. Moreover, writing some detailed explanations on the board was also often implemented by the teacher and timeline of the tenses was also given.

Related to personal model types of teaching styles which means giving examples of material, it was observed that the teacher tended to brainstorm and elicit examples of material (e.g. food and drink) orally by asking students to mention some examples and write them on the board or asking students to write the examples on the board. Moreover, in giving and providing the examples, the teacher also wrote his own examples on the board before asking students to write their own example on their notebooks. In addition, the teacher also implemented some interesting games which lead students to move and interact with their friends such as True/False games, translation game, miming game, and guessing games. For example, in miming game, the teacher asked students to work in groups in which one of the group members mimed a sentence related to house obligation and the other groups member would guess what was the sentence.

From this finding, this study interprets that in giving examples of learning materials, the teacher's teaching style contribute a lot to kinesthetic learners. It means that interactive games are the most favorable activity by the students and this can be seen from the interview notes quoted below.

"I usually give examples like eliciting the words with spoken, I ask one by one. Then, I sometimes write the words in the board or I ask students to write the examples. Besides, I often use games to elicit examples such as guessing and miming games, and many other games"

In implementing the games during the learning process, it was seen that there are many kinds of media that the teacher provided. Visual media in a form of cards which are made from cuts of papers are the most useable media applied by the teacher. It is because the cards are easy to find and to use. Then, songs are also often played as an audio media implemented in certain games like True and False game and true moving games. Of course this gives many advantages to visual learners who like pictures and audio learners who like songs. The description about the use of media in this study is regarded as teacher's teaching style in facilitating or teacher's action as facilitator.

In assigning students, it was observed that the teacher liked to ask students to work in pairs and group more often than letting them to study individually. From five times observation, it was seen that the teacher always implement pair work and group in her teaching. This finding is also supported with the data derived from the interview. The quotation toward the interview data is stated below.

"Almost every day, I apply pair work and groups. The students will like if I ask them to work in pairs and group. In grouping the students, I usually divide by counting numbers (1,2,3, and so on), and alphabets like A and B. Pair is more often than groups. I ask the students individually to do exercises from the book"

The finding derived from the interview above can ban interpreted that the teacher preferred assigning students to work in pairs during the learning process, yet individual activity is assigned while the students do some exercises from the book

By letting students to work in pairs and groups, the teacher is perceived to give many benefits to kinesthetic learners who prefer learning while interacting actively with their friends. Since there are more kinesthetic learners than other learning types of learners, the teacher has matched the learning styles successfully. However, the teacher also doesn't forget to meet the demand for verbal learners by assigning them to work individually when they do the exercise from the book.

Moreover, in assigning the students, the teacher liked asking students to do mingling activity rather than individual. This activity was implemented by the teacher to practice students' speaking like dialogue, conversation, and interview. For example, the students were asked to go around the classroom and interview some of their friends about certain speaking topics i.e. asking and giving opinion. Again, this type of interactions gives many advantages for kinesthetic learners. Even though, this teaching style was directed to kinesthetic learners, it was observed that all learners including visual, audio, and verbal liked and enjoyed the activity happily.

This group work could be in forms of pairs or groups consisting of 3 to 5 students or big groups. The students are asked to work in groups to do certain activities such as doing games, mingling, groups talk or discussion, and role plays and this is suitable for kinesthetic learning styles. Furthermore, in terms of giving instructions to students, spoken instructions are favorable comparing to other types of instructions, yet there are also few teachers who like to rewrite the instructions if the students seem to have difficulties in understanding the instructions given.

From the finding elaborated before, this study conveyed some discussions. First, it seems that the teacher prefers more spoken explanation with written definition and concepts on the board. Of course, this teaching style could give lots of advantages for audio and verbal learners. The second, written timeline on board could help visual learners to learn quickly.

Furthermore, taking a look at the types of students' learning styles which is favored by most of students' i.e. kinesthetic learning styles, it seems that there is a match between students learning styles and teacher's teaching styles. It is due to the fact that students' like kinesthetic styles and teachers like to teach with the styles that the kinesthetic learners like.

Even though to match the teachers' teaching styles and students' learning styles is an impossible thing to do (Spoon and Schell, 1998), this study has proved that varying the teaching styles could become a way to match them. In fact, this is one of the ways to avoid the gap in teaching like what Kumaravadivelu (1991) in Rambe (2015) thinks in his research saying that "both teachers and students will probably have different styles. What teachers have to do with those problems is minimizing the differences by trying to match their teaching styles to students' learning styles" Therefore, from the discussion above, it is seen that the teacher has tried hard to match the students' learning differences by varying her teaching styles including spoken explanation, visual and written examples, kinesthetic practices or real life context of exercises.

CONCLUSIONS

Due to the variety of students' styles in learning, it is impossible for teacher to apply all styles that students have in the classroom, yet it is important to vary teaching styles to match students' learning styles. Matching here can be said as an action of knowing students' learning styles differences by giving instruments, provide as well as vary teaching activities to overcome the styles differences.

One of the finding in this study says that kinesthetic is the dominant style that students have in learning which means they like learning by doing direct actions and practices in context of real life. Then, they also like moving around from their seats, and like learning together with their groups rather than individual learning. In fact, games are the most favorable activity chosen by these learners. In contrast, there are only a few students who are regarded as verbal which means that the students prefer to learn by lots of reading and writing.

In matching the students' learning styles, it is seen that the teacher tries hard to match them by applying various types of teaching styles such as becoming a good facilitator, role

model, delegator, and experts. In fact, the teachers tend to match the kinesthetic learning styles in which they like to provide the learning with lots of authentic task related to students' real life context.

This research has some weaknesses that can not cover all things related to students' learning styles, teachers' teaching styles, and ways to match them. One of the suggestions derived from this research is the fact that there is a need to analyze the effect of match or mismatch toward students' achievement. This is in order to see whether the match or mismatches will influences students' learning outcomes.

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