

THE IMPACT OF CONSIDERING STUDENTS' LEARNING STYLE TOWARD TEACHERS' PEDAGOGICAL SKILLS

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ABSTRACT

Teachers nowadays tend to neglect to find their students' preferred learning style in teaching. In order to create a meaningful context learning, it is important to analyze the students' learning style. A research conducted in a Christian school in North Jakarta. Total 53 students from 2 classes (grade 4 and grade 5) who were in English class joined this research. This paper aimed to convince teachers why should they bother to pay attention to students' learning style and some pedagogical aspects which will be impacted from students' learning style, especially in teaching English for primary level. As God's creation, it is possible to have differences in one community, in this case the difference in learning. The result of this study shows positive impacts both for the teacher and the students. In knowing students' learning style, teachers found the improvement in doing their lesson plan, and in choosing the right methods, strategies, and assessment for students.

Keywords: Christian Teachers, Learning Style, Pedagogical Skill

BACKGROUND

There are many factors that influenced students' performance in learning the lessons. It could be their motivation of learning, prior knowledge or interests in some specific lessons, or the teachers' pedagogy skill, classroom management skill, and even the environment of the classroom or the school. Things mentioned above are internal factors and some are external factors from the students which could be reached by the teacher in helping the students in order to increase their performance in learning. It is because as a learner, students have needs that could help them better in learning and taking in any information, instructions, and knowledge from the teacher. Therefore, it is important for teachers to be able to acknowledge the students' needs in the teaching and learning process.

Phyllis in Santrock (2018) says that teachers' role in creating the learning environments is needed to make students cognitively engaged during the learning process. In order to achieve this, it would be better for teachers to try to put the lessons in a meaningful context in order to make students cognitively engaged. Based on Haylock's (2007) definition about the meaningful context in learning, it could be said that when teachers bring the lessons together with the aspects of students' daily life, in which any lessons can be embedded, is a meaningful context teaching. Interestingly, by knowing students' learning style, it will be easier for teachers to teach with a meaningful context. It is because teachers will know their students' specific preferences in learning which will make them comfortable to learn since their experience in the classroom and in their other environment is similar.

By this, it could be said that there are two important factors that influenced students' performance in learning the lessons which are their learning styles and teachers' teaching style. Both are actually things which have a correlation to one another. Ideally, teachers would try to know the students' learning style through observation or a test. Then, if teachers already have the results, they would adjust their teaching style with students' learning style. That sequence mostly happened if teachers already acknowledge that it is important to know the value and the importance of their teaching were presented well, students will grasp the lesson better, and if they did not find the teaching appealing, most likely they do not want to learn (Gilakjani, 2012).

However, the researcher found that some teachers in the Christian school in North Jakarta still do not understand this. It could be seen from the interview

conducted by the researcher to 4 primary teachers which consist of 2 English teachers and 2 other subject teachers. There was a gap found between their answer and their actions in the classroom. They admit that they know the concept of students' learning style and considered it as important to be applied in the classroom. However, they did not apply it in their daily teaching for about 2 weeks based on the observation which impacted students' performance and behavior in the classroom.

Meanwhile, as Christian teachers, they should know that it is biblical to know students' learning style. Beam and Keith (Beam & Keith, 2011) support with the fact that during His ministry on the earth, God The Son was not using only one way to communicate to people at that time. As what Hebrews 1:1 says "Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets," (ESV). Even the Triumph God uses various ways in delivering His words. This, however, made all His chosen people at that time, understand every teaching that He wanted to tell them. Thus, in this case, teachers could also follow Jesus' ways to teach students in order to make them learn, understand, achieve more.

Therefore, this paper aims to convince teachers why should they bother to pay attention to students' learning style and some pedagogical aspects which will be impacted from students' learning style, more specific in teaching English for primary level.

CONSIDERING STUDENTS' LEARNING STYLE AS THE FOUNDATION FOR TEACHERS

The Dick and Carrey's system approach model for designing instruction should have clearly explained the reason for teachers to pay attention to students' learning style. This *Instructional Design (ID)* model is actually focused more on the delivery of the content itself (Kurt, 2015). Kurt (2015) also explained that it has 10 steps that would help teachers in knowing what to teach and how to teach, and each steps are actually connected and influenced to one another. There are identifying instructional goals, conducting instructional analysis, analyzing learners and contexts, writing performance objectives, developing assessment instruments, developing and selecting instructional materials, designing and conducting a formative evaluation of instruction, revising instruction, and last designing and conduction summative evaluation.

Interestingly, teachers should pay attention to the third point since it turns out that considering students' learning style is included in the analyzing learners and contexts part. This part talks about figuring out the students' skills and how to use them. "Learners' current skills, preferences, and attitudes are determined along with the characteristics of the instructional setting and the setting in which the skills will eventually be used." (Dick, Carey, & Carey, 2015, p. 6). Teachers should understand that students have their own preferences in learning, and it will be better if teachers consider this thing so that students will find the learning situation which makes them comfortable and achieve more during the lesson. By this, it is clear that one of the ways in achieving this part is by knowing students' learning style since

it will help teachers to sharpen their focus which will lead to successful learning for students (Dick, Carey, & Carey, 2015).

Some previous research has found the benefits of considering students' learning style specifically in students' academic achievement. One of them is Cassidy and Eachus in Simon Cassidy (2014), which found that in considering students' learning style, there was a positive correlation with the teachers' strategic approach which increased students' academic achievement. Moreover, "learning style was also found to correlate significantly with other academic performance-related factors such as academic self-efficacy and academic locus of control." (Cassidy, 2014, p. 439). Therefore, without knowing students' learning style, teachers would lose a lot of chances to improve students' achievement.

The research held by Gilakjani (2012) shows other consideration of why teachers should bother to consider students' learning style, which is it will make students' to be an effective problem solver. It is because when students are receiving learning area that is suitable for them, they will fully confident to take control of themselves and manage to solve various problems. Teachers should be able to see this important point as well and try to make the best learning environment that students can get.

Since the study more focuses on the primary level, the researcher would like to discuss facts about the suitability between students' learning style with their cognitive development in the realm of psychology which is about brain development in middle and late childhood. O'Connor (2016) says that in order for children to have an optimal development, they should experience a warm and good nurturing in their early years. Children at the primary level are the right time to

make them experienced a warm and good nurturing so that they can have an optimal development when they will step into a higher level of education. Teachers should have the understanding of this fact so that they could know that the time they have in teaching primary students and utilize it wisely.

Other than that, students at the primary level are experiencing cognitive changes which teachers should understand in order to know their brain works. Santrock (2015) gave two important points of cognitive changes in middle and late childhood, which are:

a. Piaget’s Cognitive Developmental Theory

Piaget argues that the concrete operational stage happened around age 7 to 11 where children could “perform concrete operations, and they can reason logically as long as reasoning can be applied to specific or concrete examples.” (Santrock, 2015, p. 278). Concrete operations will make children see some characteristics rather than focusing only on one object. By this, teachers will know their students are experiencing this stage where they should not decreasing or increasing this standard.

b. Information Processing

In this stage, children’s ability to process information is developing. Their long-term memory increases where they could actively construct

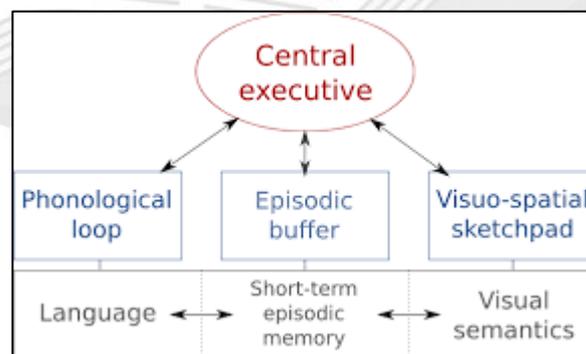


Figure 1. Working Memory Model

their memory. Based on figure 1, he explains that “input from sensory memory goes to the phonological loop, where information about speech is stored and rehearsal takes place, and visuospatial working memory, where visual and spatial information, including imagery, are stored.” (Santrock, 2015, p. 280).

To understand students’ learning style start from this point. It is the basic theory of how students’ think and somehow some parts could work better than the other. By this, teachers could see the importance of considering students’ learning style so that there will be an improvement in students’ achievement.

THE WAY TO KNOW STUDENTS’ LEARNING STYLE

As discussed above, it is better for teachers to know their students’ learning style in the first place before they are going to make decisions of strategies, methods, or any activities that they are going to do in the classroom. By this, teachers should also know the way to know their students’ learning style. Theories of students’ learning style have been developing these recent years. However, the theory that is most widely known is Fleming’s VAK Model. This model is aimed to take in information by using the sensory modalities (Fleming & Mills, 1992). It is divided into three learning styles, which are:

a. Visual

Visual learners prefer to use their eyes and seeing something. This style of learner will take in any information better by using a graphic, charts, picture or photo, something with colors on an object or a passage.

b. Auditory

Auditory learner prefers to use their ears and hearing sound. This style of learner will take in any information better by hearing utterances or audio from the speaker.

c. Kinesthetic

Kinesthetic learner prefers to use their sense of touch or movement. This style of learner will take in any information better by doing some activities which make them move.

In this case, the researcher would like to conduct the learning style test.

Firstly, so that it will be clear, the researcher will be using the English Language learning for collecting the data since the research was conducted only in English class. Then, it was found that students in Christian School in North Jakarta came from different background. The students are learning English as their first language. Even though the school is located in the city, they rarely using English in their daily life. It could be seen from the observation conducted by the researcher for a month.

This table below shows the students' diagnosis in English class.

Table 1. Students' Diagnosis in English Class

Aspects	Diagnosis
Cognitive	The students are learning English as a foreign learner, they have known simple vocabularies of hobby and in sharing personal information.
Affective	The students have known how to respect others by showing the attitude

	to listen carefully to their friends and teachers.
Psychomotor/skill	The students are able to state a fragmentary sentence related to hobbies and personal information.

By this, it could be said that they are still finding it difficult to learn English. This fact is also supported by the researcher observation in the classroom when some of them asked questions like “*Miss, what is ‘read’?*” and “*Miss, what is ‘learning’?*” Those words are simple vocabulary that they should have got in a lower level of education, yet they did not know the meaning of those words.. Moreover, their homeroom also directly said that only a few of them who like to learn English, “*It was the first time I taught in here, and only two students raised their hand when I asked who likes to learn English?*”

In seeing this problem, the researcher conducted a test in order to find out their learning style. By using the questionnaire adapted from “What’s Your Learning Style?” (2010) (Appendix A). They were being asked by the teacher based on the questionnaire and they were answering in the sheet of paper. Some of the questions are:

Question 1.

When you study for a test, would you rather...

- a) read notes, read headings in a book, and look at diagrams and illustrations.
- b) have someone ask you questions, or repeat facts silently to yourself.
- c) write things out on index cards and make models or diagrams.

Question 5.

To learn how a computer works, would you rather...

- a) watch a movie about it.
- b) listen to someone explain it.
- c) take the computer apart and try to figure it out for yourself.

The result shows that students in grade 4 are mostly kinesthetic learners with only 11 of them are visual learners and 6 of them are auditory learner (Appendix B). Meanwhile, students in grade 5 are mostly visual learner with only 10 of them are auditory learners and 3 of them are kinesthetic learners (Appendix C). By knowing the students; learning style the researcher planned to see its influence toward teachers' classroom management skill, teachers' lesson plan and assessment, and students' achievement in the classroom.

Table 2. Lesson Plans

Meetings	Detail (Strength/Weakness)
Lesson plan 1	The voice is clear, but most of should have more paid attention on students attitude, most of them ignore your teaching
Lesson plan 2	Thanks for being firm about the rules and rebuking some students in English Creative rewards to let the students choose: storytelling or watching a video at the end of the class if they behave nicely
Lesson Plan 3	Thanks for giving clear instructions by demonstrating without translating into Bahasa. Clear voice but need to use more eye contact to get students more focused.

LEARNING STYLE AFFECTS TEACHERS' CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT SKILL

In their middle and late childhood, there will be various misbehavior from the students. Dr. Beth Ackerman (2012) states that usually most of the teachers will face students who really challenge them. It is possible for students to misbehave during the learning process. The following behaviors are the most often occurs in school, Ackerman gave this ten points:

Table 3. Ackerman's List of Students' Misbehavior

Ackerman's List of Students Misbehavior
Poor organization
Problems following directions
Not staying on task and attending
Unable to interpret and remember information
Behind in basic skills Has low expectations by others
Does not appear to know how to learn
Unable to make connections
Demonstrate learning styles that are different than the teacher's
Is not an active learner

In seeing this, the role of teachers is highly needed. The first step will be preventing these misbehaviors to occur in the classroom. To prevent this problem is to prevent and see the factors that could lead students' to misbehave. It is by establishing a positive learning environment: the physical and psychological

environments, classroom rules and routines, and monitoring students' behavior (Cruickshank, Jenkins, & Metcalf, 2012)

The observation conducted to students in a Christian school in North Jakarta, which shows that there is a strong and positive impact on students in establishing the positive learning environment mentioned above. The mentor teacher is a homeroom teacher in grade 4. The observation report shows that before the first day of school, the teacher with the help from her colleagues were preparing the classroom seating arrangements, decorations, and so forth. In the first day of school, the teachers directly stated the classroom rules and routines. The result shows that the students follow these agreements well without the teachers' warning.

Refers to the second focus, after the researcher found out the result of students learning style, the researcher found that it was easier to prevent and to provoke the students. The table below shows the improvement of the researcher's class management skill. Since the teacher have known the students' type, for instance, one of the students who is a kinesthetic learner, did not follow the instructions well. Then the teacher gave him three warnings, after the third warning, the teacher asked him to stand up in front of the class, near the teacher while bring his notebook. This kind consequences made him reflect to what he had done wrong and did not make him tired since his kinesthetic is more than other styles. Moreover, he was more focus in listening to instructions.

LEARNING STYLE AFFECTS TEACHERS' LESSON PLAN

Van Brummelen (2006) states that a long time ago people still living with the perception that students are just like blank slates. Teachers would make this

chance as the place to ‘pouring in’ any knowledge. This, however, makes the learning as teacher-centered learning where teachers are presenting, lecturing, and giving, meanwhile, the students are receiving. This perception is wrong since it does not treat students as the barrier of God’s Image. “They also neglect that students learn from experience and investigation, posing and solving problems, interacting with peers, and creating products.” (Brummelen, 2006, p. 93). If teachers have already understood about this, they would be able to plan the lesson based on this fact.

This part comes after teachers already understand the importance of figuring out the students’ learning style. There are two influenced points, they are: 1) Making the lesson plan and, 2) Making the assessment. Dick and Careys (2015) say that after analyzing the learners, teachers need to set specific statements of what learners will be able to do in the learning process. In other words, teachers should set their expectations on the subject. The important thing is the planning should be derived from the result of analyzing the learners. “When educators are aware of their students’ unique characteristic in learning, then a flexible and effective methods can be applied for better learning.” (Banas, 2018, p. 401).

LEARNING STYLE AFFECTS TEACHERS’ ASSESSMENT FOR THE STUDENTS

As discussed above, students’ learning style has its advantages for both teachers and students. Especially, in the making of students’ assessment. Teachers should realize that matching the assessment with students’ learning style could help them better in doing the assessment. Dick and Careys (2015) state that the formative

evaluation could have a purpose to create and improve instructional processes and products. In addition, the main function when teachers give a test or assessment to students is actually to find out of the students have achieved the objectives of the assessment

In making the assessment, the researcher also uses the students' preferred learning style. The 5th grader is mostly visual and kinesthetic learner. Since the subject here is English, besides the students' learning style, the researcher also considers their language development. "The first and most obvious point that comes to mind is that language is used to express the child's cognitions of his environments." (Lust & Foley, 2004, p. 241). On other words, the environment that teachers should build is the environment which also encourages them to understand the language that they are studying.

Brown (2014) argues that language learners should be seen as intelligent beings proceeding through logical and systematic stages of acquisition and not learners who keep on doing mistakes in learning the language. This, however, influenced by their linguistic environment. Thus, in teaching language, teachers should pay attention to their students' stage of language skill so that they can match any information being taught. This will be better if the environment in the classroom is also in accordance with students' learning style.

Finally, it can be concluded that it will be better for teachers to pay attention to the students' assessment which adjusted with their learning style. Since it proved that there is a strong impact that the students will get the focus needed in doing their assessment. They will be more comfortable from the environment built on the classroom as well as their assessment.

DISCUSSION

Knight (2006) clearly declares the role of teachers in Christian perspectives. A teacher is preacher and shepherd as God's agent of reconciliation. Since the main function of Christian education is to redeem and to reconcile, it means that teachers should be able to find them who are lost and caged in the sin. As the lost sheep that knows they are lost but do not know the way home, as the firstborn child who does not have enough spiritual awareness in realizing his deeds, and as the lost and the youngest child who knows that he is lost and knows the way home yet he does not want to go back (Knight, 2006).

In seeing this, Christian teachers should see their students who are sinner and yet redeemed by His grace. Students are God's image (Genesis 1:27). From the very first time, God created humans and other creations, all good, all in good existence. This shows that humans are created and depend fully to the Creator, however, humans are also men who have the free will to make decisions, to set goals, and to move in the direction of those goals (Hoekema, 2009). However, since the fall, humans become distorted creation of God who lives in sin and could only be saved by His grace.

Teachers now know who they are and what their roles, also who their students in the Christians perspective are. This, however, does not rule out the possibilities of the difference that could occur in any classroom. "The Bible speaks strongly about our varying abilities should familiarize themselves with 1 Corinthians 12." (Ackerman, 2012, p. 10). In other words, differentiation is something that is not wrong, but it is actually the uniqueness that God created for each and every person beautifully. In this case, several students' learning style.

Brummelen (Steppingstones to Curriculum: A Biblical Path, 2008) says that the Bible also taught people that every person has their own unique gifts.

“Students differ greatly in their preferred learning styles.” (Brummelen, *Berjalan dengan Tuhan di dalam Kelas: Pendekatan Kristiani untuk Pembelajaran*, 2006, p. 105). It is the teachers’ job to provide students with experiences that match with their preferred learning style. In the first focus, it has been discussed of reasons why teachers should bother to consider students’ learning style. The previous study proved that considering students’ learning style will give benefits to students by increasing their focus which makes them learn and achieve better (Gilakjani, 2012).

After discovering the importance of considering students learning style, it has been discussed the way to know students learning style. Moreover, it is not only students who will get the advantage, but also the teacher. It will also influence teachers’ pedagogical skill, in the realm of classroom management, teachers’ lesson plan, and students’ assessment.

Table 4. Mentor's Feedback of Lesson Plans 1 and 2

Lesson Plans	Aspect	Score	Detail (Strength/Weakness)
1	Opening		It’s good to tell the students your rules in English class, but instead of asking them open their dictionaries to search for the meaning, it is better to demonstrate with gestures. Add more questions! Ask a student to voluntarily come forward and share their hobbies...
	• attracting the attention	2	
	• delivering learning objectives	3	
	• motivating students	3	
	• reviewing lesson	2	
2	Classroom Management		Thanks for being firm about the rules and rebuking some students in English. Create a creative reward to let the students choose: story telling or watching a video at the end of the class if they behave nicely.
	• Able to manage the class well, firm, clear voice	3	
	• Giving consequences; reward and punishment	4	
	• Providing appropriate and consistent	3	

After having the learning style result (Appendix A & B), the researcher started to make the lesson plan for the next meetings using the result as the starting point. Appendix D shows that when the first time the researcher taught, she did not pay attention much about the students' learning ability. It shows the activity from the lesson plan 1 was completely far from their learning style. It conducted reading as the opening activity followed with the next activity which was finding the words that they did not understand from the passage from the dictionary.

Based on the table, it could be seen that the mentor teacher try to guide the researcher to consider students' learning style. The result of this first trial was quite not good. The mentor teacher gave some specific point of feedbacks which refers to the students' learning style.

Table 5. Mentor's Feedback of Lesson Plan 5

Lesson Plans	Aspect	Score	Feedback
5	Opening		
	• attracting the attention	3	Thanks for reminding the students of the rules and for rewarding them watching a video that affects their attention. I like how you guide the kids: - read the lyrics together - sing the song together until they are quite familiar with it - ask each group to stand up and sing the song.
	• delivering learning objectives	3	
	• motivating students	3	
	• reviewing lesson	1	

Teaching Methods		
• Various teaching method	4	Thanks for good questioning giving them clues and demonstration.
• Effective in accommodating the achievement of learning goals	3	
Guided Practice		
• Clear instruction	4	Thanks for the creative guided practice using colors and suitable/appropriate media.
• Involving all student	3	
• Encouraging student who are less able	2	
Learning Media		
• Suitable and appropriate	4	I really like the idea of using the balls to measure how strong they are.
• Effective support learning	3	

It is because when the mentor teacher was told to ‘demonstrate’ and to ask students ‘come forward’, was actually match with their learning style: mostly are kinesthetic learner and visual learner (Appendix A). After that, the researcher started to understand the importance of considering students’ learning style. After several meetings, Lesson Plan 5 shows that there is an improvement in making the lesson plan suit with the students’ learning style. It could be seen that there is suitability between the students’ learning style with the planning and the strategies used in the lesson plan which affected the strategies and the method used during the teaching and learning process

The table also shows the improvement of mentor’s feedback in making the assessment. Since the 5th grader there was mostly visual and kinesthetic learner, they were given an assessment that had been designed before with their learning style. The topic studied was about comparative adjective. After several meeting, they were exposed with the formative assessment:

Table 6. Steps of the Formative Assessment

Steps	➤ They were given a sheet of blank paper
	➤ They need to make the table instructed by the teacher using their own thought of creativity
	➤ They could draw the table as they wish (any patterns, shapes, sizes)
	➤ They could decorate the table as they wish (any decorations, pictures)
	➤ Then they will do the activity “How _____ is my friend” (Appendix F)

The result shows that they were actively engaged during the lesson where at the first meeting they were very passive and quiet. It also shows that they found it comfortable in doing the assessment when it suits their preferred learning style.

This fact supports with the teacher mentor feedback below.

In the end of the day, teachers should know that “Any approach to teaching that fails to first consider who is being taught is bound to fall short. And any approach to teaching violates the nature of learners as God created them is an affront to humankind and God.” (Graham, 2009, p. 73). By this, teachers should never start the classroom if they were unsure with whom are they have the interactions for.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

a. CONCLUSION

As it has been discussed above, it is important for teachers to analyze and to consider students’ learning style in their teaching and learning in the classroom.

Since the students are created uniquely and it is beautiful to have differences in one community, both the teacher and students will get positive impacts. First, it could improve students' behavior and students' engagement both during the learning process and during working on their task. Second, by considering students' preferred learning style, teachers' pedagogical skill in some aspects will be sharpened. It will impact teachers' pedagogical skills which are classroom management skill, lesson planning skill, and assessment making skill. They will be more expert in choosing the right methods, strategies, learning media or even the proper assessment in the teaching and learning process. This, in fact, automatically will increase students' achievement and performance in the classroom.

b. RECOMMENDATION

It will be more beneficial in the future in finding out ways to manage teachers' consistency in monitoring students' progress whether or not they have achieved the learning goals planned by the teacher previously which has been adjusted with their learning style.