The Impact of Students' Preferred Learning Style on the Academic Performance at Shinas Vocational College

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ABSTRACT:

In order to make students perform well in their studies, the teachers need to consider the learners' preferred learning styles. The types of learning styles are auditory, visual, and tactical learning styles. This study examined the individual differences in learning styles in one of a public college in ALBatinah north which is Shinas Vocational College. A cross-sectional approach was employed in this study and 30 respondents from the foundation program of Shinas Vocational College were surveyed. In addition to that, the proficiency test was utilised to see if the preferred learning styles influence the students' academic performance or not. The survey contained three sections, and the proficiency test had four sections and each section consisted of five questions. The result of this research revealed that the preferred learning styles do not have an impact on the students' academic performance. For instance, those who preferred the auditory learning style did not achieve well in the proficiency test when the auditory learning style was used in the classrooms by the teachers. The implications of this paper can guide the instructors to plan and deliver different learning styles in the classrooms in order to consider all the students' preferred learning styles.

Keywords: Impact, Preferred learning style, Shinas Vocational College.

1. Introduction

This study explores individual differences in learning styles of students. Learning style refers to an individual's natural, habitual, or preferred way of absorbing information. Each student has his/her own learning styles. Actually, there are two types of learning styles such as perceptual and cognitive learning styles. The perceptual learning style includes:

1- Visual learners. It is related to the learners who acquire information when they see things in front of them.
2- Auditory learners. It refers to those who comprehend information when they listen to someone talking.

3- Haptic learning style. It is about the learners who absorb the input when they practice after the explanation.

The second type of learning style is the cognitive learning style which consists of the following:

1- Field- independent which is related to the students who see things more analytically.
2- Field-dependent refers to those who see things more holistically.

There is no one particular learning style that is better than others, so each learner has his/ her own learning style. For example, Punnapak et al (2017) claimed that 2.08% of people preferred visual learning style and 20.83% of learners used the auditory learning style. In addition to that, according to Magulod Jr. (2019), " most of the students remember and understand concepts and information better when they read. Most of them have the inclination of learning well from seeing words from sources". As a consequence, educators should not stick to one learning style. However, they must vary their ways of teaching. The objective of this paper is to identify the individual differences in learning styles of students. The significance of this study is that it helps students know their learning style and if they know their preferred learning style, they will achieve more academically. Furthermore, the findings of this paper is beneficial to both teachers and students. Moreover, this assists instructors cater to various learning style while they are teaching. Many problems have been faced by different researchers like Magulod (2018), Cimermanova (2018), Gokalp (2013), Parnord et al (2017), Yilmaz-Soylu & Akkoyunlu (2014) in their research. They have studied about individual differences in learning styles, but they did not focus on Omani students.

This study has been conducted to answer the following questions:

1- What is the preferred learning style(s)? Why?
2- What is the effect of the learning style on students' L2 performance?

The study of Oxford and Anderson started in 1970s and there has been a substantial growth in learning style research in terms of its definitions and dimensions. Also, the study of Richard Felder and Barbara began in 1991.

Learning style is the students' preferred way of comprehending the information. The types of learning styles are perceptual and cognitive learning styles. Auditory, visual, and haptic learning styles go under perceptual learning style and field-independent and field-dependent are part of the cognitive learning style.

There were many studies done on individual differences in learning styles and many different findings were found. Punnapak et al (2017) find that "the majority of the students are kinesthetic learning (33.33%), followed by group learning style (31.25%), auditory learning style (20.83%), individual learning style (8.34%), tactile learning style (4.17%), and visual learning style (2.83%)". This study, which was conducted by Parnord, Punnapak, Khanoona, and Intapan showed variation of learning styles. A questionnaire was employed to collect data for this paper.

There is a very big relationship between the preferred learning styles and the academic performance. To illustrate, visual learners achieve only when they are taught with the consideration of the visual learning style. In accordance to Magulod Jr. (2018), there is a significant relationship between learning styles and academic performance of the respondent. Reid's perceptual learning style preference questionnaire was harnesses to collect data. Nevertheless, Awang et al., (2017) underscore that there is no considerable difference between the learning style and the students' academic performance.

On the other hand, Cimermanova (2018) claims that " For the form, the ANOVA result indicated no significant interaction. In a similar manner, no interaction effect was recorded for learning style. No significant interaction effect was found when learning style was the independent variable and form and evaluation were the independent variables". The method of this study was inventory.

YILMAZ-SOYLU& AKKOYUNLU (2014) state that "the achievement of learners who have different learning styles in text-based learning

environment does not show a statistically significant change. The absence of a significant difference among the scores of students having learning styles".

"140 students who participated in the study had higher mean scores in post-tests and the difference between pre and posttest mean scores was statistically significant. A positive relationship was observed between the scores of pre and posttests" (Gokalp, 2013). Data were collected by applying an evaluation test for studying and learning activities Developed by the researcher. Correspondingly, Chetty et al., (2019) claim that the teaching styles can influence the students' academic performance.

To quote (Allen et al., 2011), "parents and teachers must work with the students to design activities, access resources and develop learning guidelines that will provide the students the best chance for success in accomplishing his/ her learning goal".

Additionally, (Pritvhard, 2009) claims that "Visual learners prefer to learn by seeing. They have good visual recall and prefer information to be presented visually, in the form of diagrams, graphs, maps, posters, and displays. Auditory learners prefer to learn by listening. They have good auditory memory and benefit from discussion. Kinesthetic learners prefer to learn by doing. They are good at recalling events and associate feelings or physical experiences with memory". However, Almigbal (2015) underpins that the preferences of learning styles are not connected to learners' academic achievement.

2. Methodology

(2.1) Research design:

A descriptive design has been utilised in this research. This design talked about students' preferences for learning styles and this study focused on the relationship between Reid's perceptual learning styles' preferences on students' academic performance.

(2.2) Context in detail:

The survey contains two parts: the first one consists of students' personal information such as name, native country and language, age, major field, and other elements. The second one composes 30 statements depending on the styles of perceptual learning which are visual,auditory,tactile, kinesthetic, individual, and group and the students have to choose from these points (strongly agree _ strongly disagree).

(2.3) Participants:

The participants in this research whose age ranged between 17 and 20 years old were 30 Omani students from different levels in English language (1_3). The respondents were from the foundation program of Shinas Vocational College in AL-Batinah north. About 10% of the students were males and 90% of them were females specialized in different majors.

(2.4) Instrumentation:

The instrumentation of this study contains two things. The first thing is the survey. The second one is the test to see if the students' preferred learning style affects their academic performance or not. The survey includes two sections. The first section is about students' general information such as age, gender, native language and so on. The second section consisted of 30 statements which will help the researchers to know the learners' preferred learning styles. The test which helps the researchers know if the preferred learning style influences the students' academic performance or not is composed of four sections. The test is about present perfect and past simple.

(2.5) Data collection and analysis procedures:

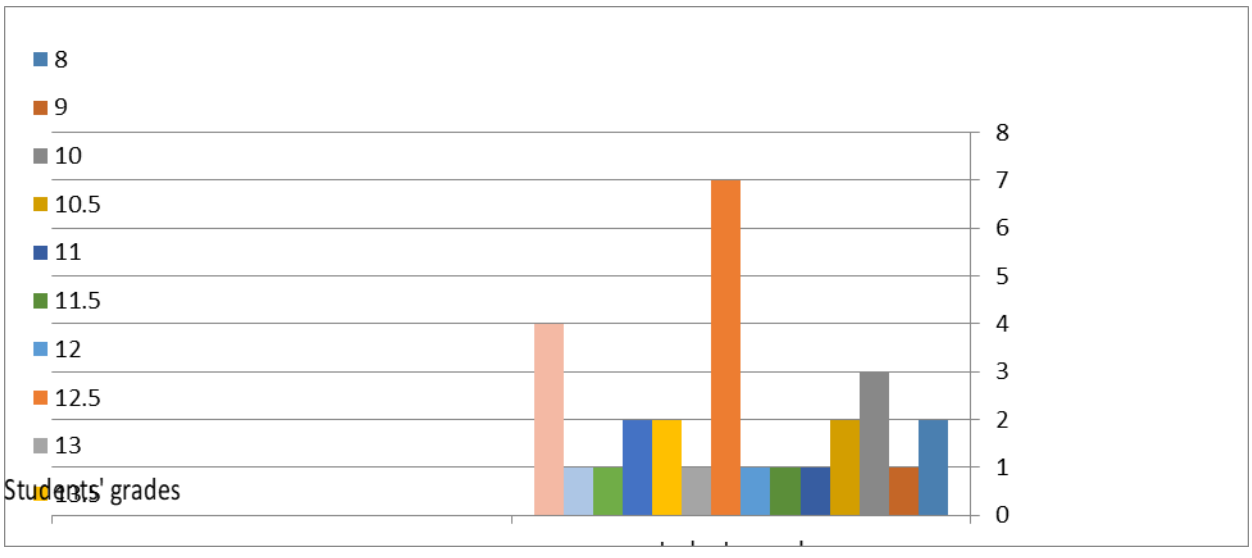
Data was collected by distributing an online survey to the students and it was completed in less than 20 minutes. In addition to that, the test was given to the students after the explanation. The auditory learning style was employed in order to realize how effective the preferred learning style is on the academic performance of the learners who preferred auditory learning style.

3. Results

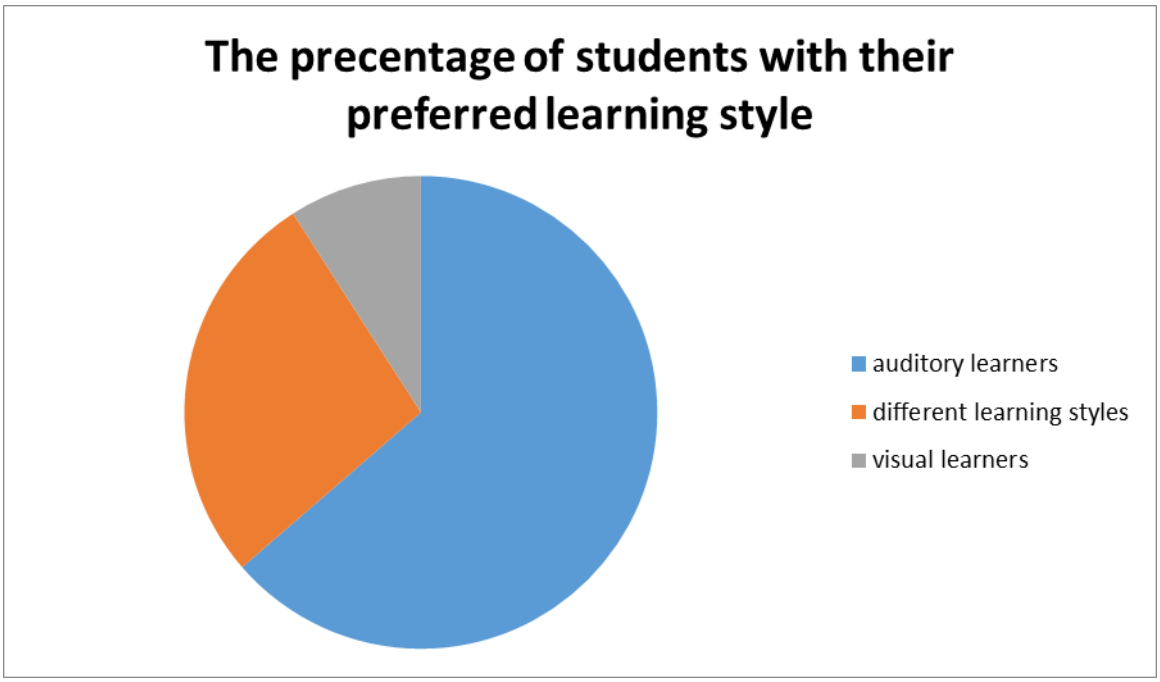
Table(1): shows the results of the students in the proficiency test out of 26 and their preferred learning style.

Name of students	Type of learning style	The score of the test
Sharouq	Different learning style(auditory, visual and haptic	26
Rahil	Different learning style(auditory, visual and haptic	10.5
Eresam	Different learning style(auditory, visual and haptic	15
Intisar	Different learning style(auditory, visual and haptic	11
Shooq	Different learning style(auditory, visual and haptic	13.5
Azem	Different learning style(auditory, visual and haptic	8
Marwa	Different learning style(auditory, visual and haptic	10
Noor	Different learning style(auditory, visual and haptic	12.5
Basma	Different learning style(auditory, visual and haptic	11.5
Zahra	Group learners	8
Amani	Visual learners	18.5
Fatima	Visual learners	14.5
Salma	Auditory learners	12.5
Salma	Auditory learners	26
Fatema	Auditory learners	26
Rahil	Auditory learners	12.5
Amna	Auditory learners	12.5
Reem	Auditory learners	10
Amal	Auditory learners	12.5
Anood	Auditory learners	10
Ammar	Auditory learners	14.5
Yahya	Auditory learners	26
Khalood	Auditory learners	10.5
Anood	Auditory learners	12.5
Ibtisam	Auditory learners	12.5
Safiya	Auditory learners	12
Iman	Auditory learners	13
Fatima	Auditory learners	13.5
Maha	Auditory learners	9

It has been found from the survey that some students are visual, some are preferring different learning styles, and some are using auditory learning style.



Chart(1): shows the number of students who got a particular mark.



Chart(2): shows the percentage of students with their preferred learning style.

The survey has shown that 70% of the respondents prefer the auditory learning style. Furthermore, 30% of the participants use different learning styles such as: auditory, visual, and kinesthetic learning styles. In addition to that, 10% of the students like visual learning style.

In the explanation that was done before the proficiency test took place. The auditory learning style was applied in order to see the effectiveness of this preferred learning style. Seventeen percent of learners were auditory learners. Their results in the test ranging between 26 and 9. Eighteen students out 30 were auditory learners. Three students got 26 out of 26, one student got 14.5 out of 26, five learners scored 12.5 out of 26, two learners gained 13 out of 26, one student got 12 out of 26, two learners scored 10.5 out of 26, and one person's result was 9 out of 26.

These results which have been got after the proficiency test, have shown that the type of learning style does not have an effect of the academic performance of the students because after the auditory learning styles has been employed, the proficiency test was given and those who prefer auditory learning styles did not get very high scores. There were only 4 students out of 18 got the full mark, but others got very low marks.

4. Discussion

While learning style has been searched about by many people, many teachers take it into consideration in order to improve the quality of their teaching and education. The main aim of this study was to find out the effect of learning style on the academic performance. The theory of learning style says that learning style is about the individual's way of understanding the information and the result of this paper has shown that students' preferred learning styles did not help them score high scores. For example, the students who prefer auditory learning style, when the auditory style was used, they could not perform well. This research paper is not in line with some previous studies. This study has found that most of the students do not achieve through their preferred learning style. However, (Magulod Jr., 2018) claimed that " most of the students remember and understanding concepts and information better when they read ". It is assumed that these different findings are due to learners' psychology and also the students' habit of education. In addition to that, (Goklap, 2013) argued that " a positive relationship was observed between the scores of pre and posttest on sub topics". This study has shown that there is a negative relationship between the preferred learning style and the academic performance. It seems that

this difference has happened due to the content. For instance, grammar should be explained using visual, auditory, and haptic learning styles and other skills require other learning styles. Therefore, it depends on the content or topics being used. The study conducted by (parnrod et al, 2017) discussed that "majority of the students has one learning style, followed by two learning styles, three learning styles, two learning styles, and five learning styles". The study which was done by Parnrod, Punnapak, Khaonoona & Intapan has supported this study since in this research, it has been discovered that 30% of learners can absorb the input by employing different learning styles such as: auditory, visual, and haptic learning styles. It seems that this is because of the environment. To illustrate, some students are taught by the educationists who mix the learning styles at the same time or use various styles of learning simultaneously since the childhood. According to (Huang, Hoi, & Teo, 2018) "The visual learning style had a weak negative relationship with the CET-4 scores. By contrast, both the auditory and kinaesthetic learning styles had week positive relationship with CET-4 scores". Comparing to this study visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic learning styles had a negative relationship on the academic performance of the students. Auditory learning style was used as a method in this research, but the auditory learners did not perform well. Also, there are very few auditory learners who did well. It is thought that the difference between this study and Huang's, Hoi's, and Teo's study is as the result of lack of the comprehension of the learners. Also, it can be because of the level of the difficulty of the proficiency test. The finding of this research has revealed that many students got low marks although they prefer auditory learning style which was being utilised as a mean of explanation. Also, there is no difference between the results except the four students who got full marks and others got low scores. However, the study done by (Rezaeinejad, Azizifar & Gowhary, 2015) explained that "the data and chi-square show there is a significant difference between score means of grade two students in all fields in Active-Reflective and Visual-verbal learning styles". It has been as an opinion that this is a consequence of the ways of teaching of teachers. In other words, some educationists use difficult vocabulary so this affects the understanding of the undergraduates and leads to bad results. Also this can be as a result of teaching strategies. Moreover, it can be because students are not fully aware of what is being taught.

5. Conclusion

The current study investigated the effect of learning styles such as: visual, auditory, and haptic learning styles on the academic performance of the students. The main finding of this research was that learning styles have no significant influence on the performance of the students academically. In this research, before the proficiency test took place, the auditory learning style was used to make the undergraduates comprehend the grammar rules which are given in the test. Many students who prefer auditory learning style got low marks and very few students performed well in the test. Also, those who are visual and kinaesthetic learners got low marks in the proficiency test. The result of this paper is different from most of previous studies as many previous studies claimed that learning styles have no effect on the academic performance, but this study has shown the opposite. The aim of this study is to know the effectiveness of learning styles on the academic performance of the students.

The recommendations of the researchers of this study say that this study should be done in Omani context because no many studies have been done in Omani and Arabian countries. In addition to that, this study has to be searched about using longtindunal approach as this kind of research should take long time to be studied. Furthermore, a large number of participants should be surveyed and tested. If the number of the learners who are given the survey and the test is not high, the results of the research will not be enough and informative. Moreover, this study has to be studied and observed in many different places so the researchers can get various and detailed results.

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