

## How to Accommodate Different Learning Styles in the Same Classroom: Analysis of Theories and Methods of Learning Styles

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### Abstract

Effective learning has always been a major concern for many educational associations. It is considered one of the most important learning processes that occur in the classroom. Teachers who are interested in understanding the process of the methods of achieving effective learning look hard for the appropriate pedagogical methods that enable them to improve classroom instruction and cover all types of students in the classroom. When the effective learning is achieved in the classroom, students can benefit from what they learn not only inside classroom but also outside classrooms. To achieve effective learning as well as effective teaching, it might be necessary for teachers to become familiar with students' methods and theories of learning (Hunt, 2011; Kumar, & Chacko, 2010). This research paper sheds light on the theories and the models of learning and teaching styles and how they play an important role in the lives of students in classroom.

**Key words:** Learning style; Teaching style; Effective learning; ESL

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### INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the learning style concept is widely used in many educational associations worldwide. After an

extensive review of learning style literature to give a clear and vivid knowledge about learning style concept, it was difficult to locate the roots of learning styles, and articles of the one who created the concept of learning style is vague. However, the concept of learning style is used to describe the idea of individuals having different learning preferences that aid them with the preferred methods needed to achieve effective and meaningful learning.

Sarasin (1999) defined learning styles as "the preference or predisposition of an individual to perceive and process information in a particular way or combination of ways" (p.3). According to Sarasin (1999), learning styles can be understood not only in terms of learning preferences but also in terms of intelligence. Learning styles can be explored through intelligence or through primary senses of human beings. Grasha (1990) described the idea of learning style as the way in which students give preference for thinking, relating to others, different experiences, and for different classroom environment and experiences.

The idea of learning styles emphasizes that individuals learn differently and prefer to be taught differently. Several researchers such as Dunn (1983), Moran (1991), Hunt, Rensulli, Gardner and Hatch, and Kolb (1976) were interested in learning styles of students; they investigated students' learning style preferences, and the variables that affect the preferences of those learning styles of students (Gallaher & Nunn, 1998). Most of their research studies support the idea that students can master the curriculum if they are taught with different strategies or different methods that complete what they lack in classroom instructions. According to Dunn (1999); Tulbure (2011), most students cannot internalize new and difficult academic information without relying on their learning styles. As a result, teachers will find it difficult if learning styles are ignored in classrooms.

Jahiel (2008) discussed three types of learning styles: visual, kinesthetic, and auditory learning styles. According

to Jahiel, most of the misunderstanding, confusion, lack of attention, or the students' feeling of blaming themselves for being not clever enough to understand the lesson is due to the lack of communication between the students and the instructors. The problem happens when teachers insist on teaching using their own teaching methods without paying attention to the students' learning styles. As a result, students will not comprehend the materials and will blame themselves for not being able to understand the lesson.

Gardner and Hatch (1989) discussed the idea of how people learn differently and have different kinds of intelligences. If a student is not good in one of the subjects, it does not mean that he or she is a low achiever. Some students are good in some subjects but weak in others. If teachers, however, are committed to match their teaching methods with students learning styles, students may become better in the fields in which they are weak.

According to Gallaher and Nunn (1998), "with the explosion of the brain research done in 1990, it had become known to instructors that learning is not the simple clear-cut process that they associate with the one-room schoolhouse" (p.77). Since 1990, more information about the students and teachers learning preference has been investigated. Teachers have been encouraged to examine and test their learning styles before they start teaching. They were motivated to learn the strength of their learning styles and teaching styles as well. As a result, matching teaching styles to students' learning styles increases teacher productivity and students' comprehension level in classroom (Gallaher & Nunn, 1998).

## 1. DEFINITION OF LEARNING STYLES

Learning style was defined by several researchers such as Dunn (1979), Reid (1998), Fleming (1998), Kolb (1984), and others. The concept of "learning style" was also cited in many popular research studies and books such as Dunn and Griggs (2000), Nunn and Gallaher (1998), Gregory (2005), and Sprenger (2003). It has been recognized widely in classrooms in the United States for more than two decades. Educators have been aware that individuals learn in a unique way that improves the comprehension process. Gallaher and Nunn (1998) compared a learning style to human beings' fingerprints. They argued that a learning style is very unique and very individual, thus they compared it to a human fingerprint.

According to Reid (1998), learning styles are internally-based characteristics that are used by learners to understand new information and discover how to learn best. Learners prefer to boost their confidence and consequently their performance. They do not follow the teaching styles of their teachers because they retain their learning styles even if they encounter different teaching styles and different classroom environments.

Some researchers differentiate between learning styles and learning strategies. They claimed that both concepts are unique and different from each other. For example, Reid (1998) argued that learning styles are internal skills that were acquired unconsciously, but learning strategies are external skills that can be learned consciously. Learning strategies are adopted by individuals to improve and develop their level of comprehension. On the other hand, a learning style is an internal characteristic developed in people since childhood. Children grow up with individual learning styles which are difficult to replace with new learning styles in the future.

Languis (1982) has a different point of view than Reid. He believes that a learning style is a consistent pattern of behavior that is formed deeply in the structure of personality which is molded by human development variables and cultural influences of experience in the school and in the society as well. Learning styles refer to methods that individuals used to process to understand regular information and comprehend new difficult information. When ESL students encounter new information, they use their regular learning styles to comprehend both the new information and new teaching styles.

Dunn (1984) defined learning styles as the way in which each person absorbs and retains information and skill. According to Dunn, the process of absorbing and retaining information is different for every student regardless of how that process is described; it is still different for every student. Learning style is the way in which each person begins to concentrate on, process, internalize, and retain new academic information. Because each person learns differently from every other person, the same instructional environment, methods, and resources will be more effective for some learners and less effective for others (Brand, Dunn & Greb 2002; Burke & Dunn, 2003).

Shaughnessy (1998) defined learning styles as a method that students use to focus on, process, and analyze new difficult tasks, information, skills, and so forth. According to Shaughnessy, the learning styles of individuals are controlled by age, achievement level, cultural background, individual's method of analysis, and gender.

Jahiel (2008) defined learning styles as the way in which individuals process information and analyze it. According to Jahiel, individuals do not rely on one type of learning styles but some of them have one primary learning style and others have more than one learning style. Individuals observe, process, and analyze the information by using one or more learning styles in order to have a complete comprehension process.

According to Gergory (2005), a learning style is "a lens that we as educators can use to help differentiate instruction to appeal, engage, and facilitate learning for

different types of students who have different needs” (p.2). It is important that educators imagine that a learning style is the gate that can give them a chance to discover how students visualize, hear, understand, and learn from teachers’ instructions. Gregroy asserted the policy that asked teachers to do some modification to their teaching methods in order to match students’ learning styles. If teachers modify their teaching methods, they can create a classroom environment suitable for all types of students’ learning preference, and they will present materials that appeal to the visual, aural, read/ write and kinesthetic learning styles of students (Gregory, 2005).

To conclude, learning style is the way in which somebody approaches the acquisition of knowledge. There are different types of learning styles. Some individuals have more than one and some of them rely only on one primary learning style. Factors, such as age, achievement level, academic level, gender, and cultural background, affect and control individuals’ learning styles.

## 2. THEORIES OF LEARNING STYLES

Since the 1970s, the concept of learning styles has been investigated profoundly (Cassidy, 2004). It has provided valuable insights about enhancing leaning performance and individuals’ learning preferences. There is also a general acceptance that individuals’ learning styles have impacted on the performance of their learning outcomes. Learning styles of individuals are different and vary among individuals. These differences are considered important because of their influence on the academic achievement of individuals. Therefore, choosing the proper learning style is one of the critical factors that affect the learning outcomes of students.

The learning style theory focuses on learning preferences among students and how they prefer to learn in academic situation. Most of the literature that was written about learning style concept focused on the immediate and long term results of teaching students. According to Sim, and Sim (1995), the majority of learning style literature research on learning styles evolved from the psychological research on individual differences. The research of how students prefer to learn concentrates on the relationships of human senses and the memory, and how they develop students’ comprehension ability. The importance of the concept of learning preference motivated researchers to start looking for a measure that can help individuals recognize their favorite learning styles. For decades, different learning-style inventories have been developed investigating the learning preferences of individuals. Most of the learning styles inventories and theories as well focused on the procedures of teaching and learning and how to gain a quality learning outcome. Therefore, researchers have been working on a qualified learning style inventories

that will secure effective learning outcomes. According to Campbell (1991), “at least 32 commercially published instruments are being used by researchers and educators to assess the different dimensions of learning style. “The instruments vary in their length, format, and complexity” (p.1). Three of these instruments are chosen to be discussed in this research study.

Kolb published the first model of Experiential Learning Theory in 1976. The model consisted of four processes learning cycle: concrete experience (CE), reflective observation (RO), abstract conceptualization (AC), and active experimentation (AE). According to Kolb, the most effective learning takes place when learning activities embrace all four processes (Hawk, &Shah, 2007; Cassidy, 2004). David Kolb developed a widely used and simply administered 9 questions in 1976 and developed them to be 12 questions questionnaire in 1985. The 12 questions survey helps individuals to measure their learning styles and learning preferences.

The learning style inventory (LSI) is based on preferred learning styles and stages. The LSI results reflect the individuals’ focus on the four learning processes and measure individuals’ preferences of concreteness and reflection (Raschick, Maypole, &Day 1998). The model has been used on a comprehensive learning theory that helps individuals recognize their learning styles. Raschick, Maypole, & Day (1998) explored ways that application of David Kolb’s learning style model can improve the quality of field education. In their research study, they first explain Kolb’s theories concerning preferred learning styles, the need to complete four learning stages in sequence (concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation), and combinations of preferred learning styles in quadrants.

Dunn (1990) defined learning styles as, “the way in which each learner begins to concentrate on process and retain new and difficult information” (p.224). When a student’s natural tendency and style are triggered, his/her ability to concentrate and make associations improves his chances of transferring information to long-term memory. The Dunn and Dunn’s Productivity Environment Preference Survey model questionnaire offers 100 questions that cover the five stimuli and their elements. The questionnaire is self-score and self-interprets (Hawk & Shah, 2007). The researchers indicated that there are five learning style stimuli and several elements within each stimulus. The five stimuli have been identified in helping individuals their process of learning. These five stimuli are:

- Environmental
- Emotional
- Sociological
- Physical
- Psychological

Environmental stimulus includes: sound, light, temperature, and design. Emotional stimulus includes: structure, motivation, persistence, and responsibility/conformity structure. The Sociological stimuli includes: study/learn Alone, paired with another, study/learn with a group Colleagues. Physical stimuli includes: perceptual strengths (auditory, visual, tactile, intake, time of day, and mobility). The Psychological stimulus includes: analytical or global, left brain or right brain, reflective or impulsive (Cassidy, 2004).

According to Dunn (1990), individuals differ among each other. Some of them prefer to learn in quiet places but others do not prefer quiet places. These kinds of individuals may be affected if teachers ignore their learning preferences. Light is important to some individuals. Some people work well under bright lights, but others prefer to learn under low lights. According to Dunns' LSI, the following factors can affect individuals' learning process.

- Temperature
- Design
- Motivation
- Time
- Mobility
- Individuals' senses

Fleming's VAK/VARK model is expanded upon the earlier Neuro-linguistic programming VARK models: visual learners, auditory learners, and kinesthetic or tactile learners (Lincoln & Rademacher, 2006). It is a perceptual mode that focuses on different ways in which individuals take in and give out information in order to provide them with a profile of their instructional preferences.

According to Fleming (1998), "the VARK is in the category of instructional preference because it deals with perceptual modes (p.1)". Students use their senses in any academic setting. They use their sight, speech, and their hearing with less focus on taste, touch or smell. According to him there are some dominant preferences and some that are close to zero.

The VARK inventory uses four modalities. The first one is Visual (V). According to Fleming (1998), "this mode includes information in charts, graphs, flow charts, circles, and all the symbolic arrows, circles, hierarchies and other devices that teachers use to represent what could have been presented in words. This mode does not include these media: -pictures, movies, videos and animated websites because they use a combination of many modes (multimodal)-mainly kinesthetic, read/write and aural" (p.1). The second modality is Aural (A). This model describes students' hearing and speech. Students who prefer this mode learn best from lectures, group discussions, or students' seminars. Fleming (1998) argued that students who prefer to this model learn best from traditional lectures, group discussions, tutorials, and seminars in which they have a chance to talk and

communicate with other students. The third modality is Read/Write(R). According to Fleming (1998), "this modal preference is for information displayed as text and printed words" (p.2); and most teachers have a strong preference for this modality. The fourth modality is Kinesthetic (K). This modality refers to perceptual preference related to the use of experience and practice. The key in this modality is that students will be connected to reality.

Fleming (1998) presented several research studies that proved that students can develop their academic performance and get higher test scores when there is a correlation between students' learning styles, tested by VARK instrument, and teachers' teaching styles (Hawk & Shah, 2007).

### 3. LEARNING STYLES AND TEACHING STYLES

Teaching is about making students differently. What I mean by "different" is making them unique. Educational institutions always look for methods that can assist them to make their institution more effective and more active in regards to teaching students. Since students prefer to learn by adopting specific learning styles, teachers also prefer to teach students specific methods and strategies. Herman Witkin (1977) reported that elementary teachers have different teaching styles. According to Herman Witkin, the elementary school teachers prefer to be socially oriented. They observed other people for appropriate behavior and they respond to different views and opinions. On the other hand, the secondary school teachers prefer to take decisions by themselves so they prefer to be more independent. They are less social than the elementary teachers and more self-motivated (as cited in Campbell, 1991).

Dunn (1979) discussed how teachers teach students. Dunn argued that the efforts of teachers misdirect their wrong assumptions and their superficial designs. They choose to develop the students' performance level but sometimes they fail because they are misdirected by their assumptions. According to Özkan, and Ulutaş (2012), teaching is not only telling and learning. It is more than these limited concepts. Both concepts have deeper meanings than the superficial assumption of a simple word. The superficial assumption may lead to superficial teaching and learning process which create difficulties for both students and teachers.

According to Dunn (1979), the mismatch occurs among students and teachers is due to some difficulties in recognizing the positive characteristics of teachers' styles and difficulties in using the appropriate measure that scales the aspects of the teaching learning process. Another difficulty is that teachers may not be good enough to teach even if he/she is knowledgeable, and he/she may not have the knowledge of learning styles when observing

students. According to Dunn (1979), the teaching style is a result of the academic background of the teachers. It is a result of how teachers learned. This what clarifies the difference in teaching styles among teachers and who they reflect on exercises using different teaching method that imitates the way they learned.

Campbell (1991) argued that instructors usually lean towards teaching the way they feel relaxed and comfortable in a learning situation. They usually encourage students to observe their ways of teaching. Some teachers believe that students can learn and comprehend the lesson if they imitate teachers. Some teachers believe that their style or method of teaching is the best and students can benefit and understand since this teaching style is preferable by teachers themselves. In this way, they teach the way they like and do not give learning styles any attention. It is not always the case for one reason.

According to Sarasin (1999), if teachers prefer to perceive things in an auditory way, their teaching styles will be likely to emphasize hearing. If they tend to perceive things visually, their teaching strategies will be likely to rely on visual picture. If they tend to perceive things in tactile ways, their teaching strategies will probably appeal to the touch and movement. To solve this problem, instructors are encouraged to recognize the learning styles of students and integrate them with class activities. Relying on teaching styles only may create obstacles for students in general and ESL students in specific.

When teachers think of how and what they teach, they will discover that their teaching style consists of two parts. One is their learning styles and the second their past successful learning experiences. Therefore, teachers teach the way they learn and they tend to choose the lessons according to their learning styles. Educators and researchers cannot deny the fact of what works for teachers might not work for students which may lead to academic gap among teachers and students (Sarasin, 1999). When this gap occurs in class, neither teachers nor students will feel comfortable in class. As a result, the low comprehension level may expand and students may become bored; teachers will not feel that students are willing to comprehend the lesson. The motivation will be in the lowest level for both teachers and students.

According to Campbell (1991), teachers need to be aware of their own learning styles. They need to work on their teaching styles to motivate students to be high achievers. Teaching ESL students is not easy compared to regular classes. It is sometime difficult to teach students according to their learning styles but it is sometimes worthy and necessary to be applied in these types of classrooms. So teachers who teach to gain a stipend at the end of each month will not be able to motivate students to develop and be higher achievers. Teaching students need more than a salary to teach them effectively. Teachers

need to be passionate for teaching students; they should care for their students regardless of their origins and be willing to teach them effectively.

It is known that teachers like to teach students the way they were taught and some teachers believe that it is the best way to teach. Teachers also tend to choose the subjects they teach based on their learning preferences, but they have to change and collaborate with students who play the main role in classroom (Jaenke, 2012). When teachers recognize how students learn, they will be able to customize these learning styles to teach styles that are most responsive to that style. Some teachers will be comfortable using several different teaching methods since they are used to use only one or two but they can try to wait for the results to see if the students' level of performance is developed or goes lower.

Kayoko Yamauchi (2008) conducted her dissertation on how adult ELLs (English language learners) learn effectively according to their learning preferences and their cultural backgrounds as well. The researcher used descriptive statistics to understand the respondents' background in relation to the results of the Productivity Environmental Preference Survey (PEPS).

The comparison between productivity and learning styles preference of ESL teachers and students showed that similarities and differences among ESL students and teachers were significant for understanding learning style preference of diverse respondents. Similarities from the result of standard score over 60 showed that the majority of ESL students and teachers preferred to learn in the afternoon and they produced better outcomes in a structured and peer-oriented learning environment. The higher preference for the afternoon is because the difference of time between ESL students' home country and United States in which it affects the time learning preference. This encourages teachers to adjust the time for new ESL students to provide an effective learning opportunity for ESL students.

The more the students reflect upon themselves in learning process, the more they would be able to develop self-awareness in developing their learning styles. The result of this study showed that ESL learners' level of academics and country of origin controls the motivation of these students, so teachers need to examine the learning environment and the type of programs as well. In doing this, teachers will be able to extend ESL students' performance and pay more attention when they choose the educational setting for their students.

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#### **4. ADAPTATION TO DIFFERENT LEARNING STYLES IN THE SAME CLASSROOM**

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Dunn and Dunn (1978) emphasized the need to recognize the learning style characteristics of students and then

to assign them to methods and resources with which they are most likely to achieve. The researchers argued that the recognition of learning preferences of students will likely lead teachers to consider an overall teaching program that covers the major types of students in the classroom. It will help instructors to facilitate student's comprehension level by dividing them into matching groups which will facilitate students' academic progress in the classroom.

The fact that individuals in general and students in specific have different learning strategies forces students to use these kinds of strategies to observe, remember and then learn new information and use it appropriately in class. The students are the only ones who will be responsible for using the appropriate learning strategies for the sake of comprehension and problem solving. According to Franzoni, and Assar (2009), "Students go through a process where they recognize the new knowledge, review previous concepts, organize and restore that previous knowledge, match it with the new one, assimilate it and interpret everything that was seen on the subject" (p.19). When students receive new information, they try to collect this information, organize it, and then match it to their previous information. If the method that was used to teach this information was different from the one that is used by students, comprehension gap may occur between the sender and the receiver of information (Franzoni & Assar, 2009).

Teaching styles are somehow different from learning styles in which teaching styles are used by educators to facilitate the comprehension process of learning among students. The design, organization, and the method of delivering teaching styles in class are crucial to the comprehension process. They play the role of connecting teaching strategies to students' learning strategies. Teaching styles must be designed in a way that matches learning styles of students. Matching teaching styles to student learning styles help students to be motivated to discover, observe, and learn the knowledge by themselves (Franzoni & Assar, 2009; Yamauchi, 2008; Dunn, 1999);

Exploring the learning styles of students is important and necessary to be investigated in any type of classroom. According to Reid (1998), English as a second language (ESL) teachers began to investigate the learning styles of their students in second-language classrooms at the beginning of 1990s. The way that students prefer to learn is more important than the way teachers prefer to teach. Accordingly, teachers need to investigate the learning styles of their students to match their teaching in classrooms. Some teachers teach their students according to the method that they were taught by which sometimes resulted in students' lack of comprehension and absence of motivation.

Boatman, Courtney and Lee (2008) discussed the impact of faculty and student learning styles on student performance, and how students and instructors were

asked to complete the VARK questionnaire to identify which of the sensory modalities they prefer to use to learn information. Hawk and Shah (2007) insisted on the idea that teaching methods do not work with all types of students. So teachers need to have more knowledge about the learning styles of students. Layzer (2000) discussed the role of classroom context in enabling the students' academic success. The researcher observed classrooms and interviewed several teachers to find out the problematic contradictions that are embedded in beliefs of teachers of adolescents.

The majority of teachers rely on lecture as primary teaching methods. They think that students learn auditory, but it is not the case all the time. Teachers need to teach students using methods that complete the students learning styles by using resources that are complement to the students' cultural background. In doing this, teachers create a friendly environment for students that can motivate them to accept the school and the new environment at the same time.

Burke and Dunn (2003) stated that teachers in the Freeport School District (FSD) began teaching to individual learning styles to ensure that all of their students performed well in school. According to these researchers, the students' academic achievement can increase significantly if teachers teach students using approaches and resources that complement the students' particular learning styles.

The teachers can also create lesson plans that motivate students and help them to know what exactly instructional objectives are required in the class and how they can achieve it. Backward design is very effective in these kinds of classrooms. It supports students with all information about the class in advance so they will not be confused and they will work to achieve the lesson objectives. Students also need to know when and how mastery can be evidenced, so the teachers have to develop a scope and sequence to help students and their parents to prepare well for each lesson (Dunn et al., 2010).

Jahiel (2008) also encouraged teachers to match their teaching styles with students' learning styles. According to Jahiel, a teacher can teach appropriately to the learning styles of the students if he or she matched the teaching styles to the students learning styles. But in order to provide a better way of learning to students, learning style should be determined earlier. Variables such as personality, perception, ability and intelligence should be considered when teaching when teaching students (Kazu, 2009). Effective teaching motivates educators to realize that everyone in the classroom is a teacher and is a learner at the same time. The wisdom behind this is to give students the chance to learn and the educators to step back and facilitate the learning process (Sprengr, 2003).

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## DISCUSSION

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The only obstacle that faces teachers in teaching students based on their learning styles is the probability that a high number of students have diverse learning styles. This might create a conflict in the classroom since covering those different learning styles in the same classroom is a challenging task for teachers and cannot be done at all times (Willingham & Daniel, 2012). Researchers cannot ignore the fact the students have different learning preferences. For instance, some students like to learn visually, some want to learn by listening, and others like to learn by doing. Some students want to learn with peers, but others prefer to work alone. To achieve effective teaching, teachers have to consider and measure students' learning styles at the beginning of each academic year in order to save students' time and efforts. According to Lifang (2010), a previous knowledge of learning styles will save both the teacher and the student's time and make the education process effective and efficient.

Some teachers deal with the concept of learning styles with some caution (Reid, 1998). They are more aware of their teaching styles than the learning styles of students, so they depend on their teaching styles to teach students. This can create problems for teachers because it cannot be a solution for teaching all kinds of students in all times (Willingham & Daniel, 2012).

Gogus and Gunes (2011) investigated the students' learning styles and effective habits in a Turkish university. In their study, they aimed to investigate the relationship between ESL students' learning styles, effective learning habits, academic performance, and their skills. The researchers argue that knowledge of the students' learning styles can help educators to design a learning environment suitable for students with different interests and preferences. They discovered that Turkish students generally like to learn through practical application like solving problems, trying to make correct decisions and preferring to deal with technical works or problems as opposed to working with social relations. The second dominant learning style, in this study, was focusing on abstract concepts, making reflective observation and assimilating them into an integrated explanation. According to these researchers, Turkish students rarely prefer learning through carrying out experiments, taking risks generating new ideas, observing situations from different perspectives, or bringing different ideas together.

Nowadays, many educational associations apply different educational methods in classrooms to cover all types of students' learning preferences. Effective teachers know that students are different, so they have different learning styles. Therefore, differentiating the teaching methods is necessary in the classroom. Students need some special type of teaching that takes into account their learning backgrounds and learning styles. The teaching methods play a vital role in the learning process of

students. The weaknesses of students can be alleviated if there are a variety of teaching methods in the classroom (Mondal, 2011).

Effective teaching practices can force teachers to think about teaching students through using different teaching methods. This technique enables educators to cover different kinds of students in the classroom. When teachers are empowered with a variety of teaching methods, they will be able to make choices that affect the teaching process in classrooms positively (Mondal, 2011). As a result, teachers do not always need to link the students' failure to the students' lack of study. It might be that these students were taught using undesirable teaching styles. Some teachers underestimate their students' abilities, and they do not consider the learning styles of their students as one of the reasons for failure which may lead students to fail, which may lower their self-esteem and make them frustrated students (Jahiel, 2008).

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## CONCLUSION

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Learning styles are considered to be effective, important, sensitive, and serious factors in preparing students for the academic and communicative professional practices in class. Individuals' learning styles are considered one of the important factors that affect the comprehension level of ESL students. According to Kruzich, Friesen, and Van (1986), to increase the academic level of students in schools, educators are urged to take into account three important elements: the nature of knowledge and skills that are taught to students in schools, the teaching methods that are used in schools, and the learning styles that students use to learn in classroom; therefore, learning styles and teaching styles play a key role in developing and enhancing the students' learning process.

The process of learning styles needs to be discussed in depth for the benefit of all students around the world. The reason behind the profound discussion is that a better understanding of the students' different learning styles can compel teachers to match their teaching styles to students' learning styles which may lead to a higher level of students' proficiency in learning in schools.

Boatman, Courtney and Lee (2008) conducted a research on the effects of learning styles and the linkage between them and teaching styles. The researchers distributed the "VARK questionnaire" of 211 students at Saint Mary College in California. Of the targeted students 49% were women and the rest were men. Of all students, 57 % of the students were Caucasian, 20% were Latino, 13% were Asian-American, 7 % were African-American, and 2 % were Native American.

The study suggested that there was a strong preference for visual learning styles. Therefore, teachers were advised to use the visual teaching methods in order to help students develop their performance level, help students to

feel that they are studying in an encouraging environment, allow student to feel special and achieve self-respect, and also help students to improve the level of comprehension in classroom.

Brunner and Majewski (1990) conducted a research study of the teaching and learning styles. They were able to prove that teachers who changed their teaching styles from traditional teaching to learning-style teaching methods were able to help their students to have higher comprehension level which led to higher achievement levels in the classroom (as cited in Shaughnessy, 1998).

Most research studies encouraged the fact that recognition of students' learning styles can help both teachers and students to achieve effective learning. The students can gain more knowledge and comprehension and teachers can know how to prepare their teachings in classrooms (Claxton & Murrell, 1987). The knowledge of learning styles is beneficial for both, students and instructors. The knowledge of learning styles will act as a gate that can help individuals recognize their learning preferences and it will help instructors to design interactive lesson plans which may result in creating a supportive learning environment in classroom. As a result, students can feel special and achieve better understanding of lessons.

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