



SOCIAL STYLES OF ONLINE LEARNERS IN GENERAL ENGLISH COURSE : A SURVEY IN THREE CLASSES IN A PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN BANDUNG, INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper is a report of a survey on identifying social types of online learners taking General English as an obligatory course in three classes in a private universities. The aim of this study is to identify learners' social types when they are involving in learning activities in online learning. Research data are gained by distributing a survey to eighty-eight online learners. The data was analyzed quantitatively and categorized into the social styles from Grasha-Riechman Student Learning Style Scales. The result indicates that the learners's social styles prefer to be more dependent, collaborative and participative in online learning.

Keywords: online learning, learning activities, social types.

1. INTRODUCTION

Up to present teaching and learning activities from home in all level of formal education have been conducted with a distance learning system since the Covid 19 has spread in Indonesia since March 2020 . In higher education institution, English Course, as an obligatory course for all students, has been conducted in online learning using internet based-technology and electronic technology.

Teachers are forced by the impact of Covid-19 to adjust the way they teach from face to face teaching into fully online teaching. The urge to adapt how to conduct good practices in online teaching makes the teacher get immersed swiftly in this situation during Covid-29 pandemic. They upgrade knowledge of online teaching and learning as well as how it is implemented in online classes by searching and learning information in internet and also by attending online seminars and workshop. The implementation of online teaching starts from the selection of online platforms, learning tasks and activities, teaching methods, assessment e.t.c. so that an effective online teaching and learning are highly expectedly fostered. One of online seminars and trainings is conducted by Spada (the online learning system) in Indonesia, a program from The Ministry of Education and Culture.

Besides teachers who must adjust the way they teach from face to face teaching into online teaching, students are also forced to adjust the way they learn from face to face learning into online learning. The readiness needed from students to learn through online classroom, such as having electronic technology, knowing how to deal with tasks and activities in their online class contributes to their successful learning. When the students are



dealing with tasks and activities in online classroom set by their teachers, the role of students's social styles influence their preference in completing the tasks and activities. For example, some would prefer to work individually completing the task rather than collaborate with others, or some like to do tasks after reading the instruction given in the e-learning, whereas others like to ask for guidance or confirmation about what and how to do before they complete the tasks.

A previous study (Hamidah, Sarina and Jusoff: 2009) involving 531 students as the participants focuses on the identification of the social interaction learning style in relation to the students' age, gender, hometown and academic performance. The social interaction learning style theory by Grasha and riechman is employed. It appears that students' social interaction learning style in different programs differed in terms of their independent learning style. Hence, based on the students' learning style, a better instructional pedagogy is created to help students become effective learners and enjoy learning simultaneously.

Another previous study (Baneshi, Karamdoust, Hakimzadeh : 2013) investigates the psychometric properties of Grasha-Riechmann Student Learning Styles Scale to 421 students in human and 618 students in technical sciences. The finding reveals that Participative Styles Scale was to be an instrument qualifying validity and reliability for measuring learning interactive styles. The next previous study (Karataş, Yalin: 2021) investigates if there is a significant difference students' academic achievements and the matching of students' learning styles to the teaching styles. The finding shows that the students' achievement scores did not change significantly according to their learning styles; A significant difference was found between the students' achievements and the matching between the instructors' teaching style and the students' learning style.

Considerations of the students' preference in dealing with the way they are involved in their learning should be taken into account by teachers when designing learning activities. This means a variety of activities need to be considered to design so that these can accommodate different students' social styles in learning. Therefore, the present study aims to identify social styles of online learners taking General English, as an obligatory course in three classes in a private universities.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Allan (2007) defines that effective learning activities refer to activities that acquire learners to mobilize, engage and enable to develop their knowledge and skills. This means that teachers need to design effective learning and teaching activities and these require a lot of efforts from teacher to design and implement these activities, so that learners are well-engaged in learning activities. This help them to develop their knowledge and skills when they are well-engaged in learning activities. Furthermore, generating interest, enthusiasm and motivation are needed when they participate in the activity (p.100)

When designing activities conducted either in a classroom, or in the workplace or online, authentic tasks or situation are designed and delivered to learners either they do these as individuals or groups (p.101). These authentic tasks are those that are relevant and related



to real, current issues. Besides that, having awareness of learners' social style in learning should be taken into account. Since this profile of learners' social style becomes a consideration to design a variety of learning activities. Thus, all learners are expectedly able to engage in all activities.

Learning styles are defined by Garsha (Stavredes, 2011:24) as "personal qualities that influence learner's ability to acquire information, interact with peers and the instructor, and otherwise participate in the learning experience". Furthermore, Stavredes views this definition put an emphasis on the social styles and the interaction taking place between peers and with the instructor in a given learning environment and this has an impact on learning.

When interactions occur in an offline class, these will be spontaneously taking place whereas in an online class teachers must design learning activities to foster productive interactions (Nilson, L.B., Goodson, L.A.: 2017). In an offline class, the amount of productive interaction between teachers and students and among students can be well-monitored directly, meanwhile in an online class it is different. This can be a challenging effort for teachers to design a productive interaction between teachers and students and among students in order that interaction can take place productively in online learning.

Anthony Grasha and Sheryl Riechman developed The Grasha-Riechman Student Learning style Scales (Grasha: 1996 cited in Stavredes; 2011: 24). This learning scales describes how learners interact with the instructor, other learners, and the learning environment. The scale ranges in six categories and in three dimensions of preferences: *Independent-dependent, competitive-collaborative, avoidant and participative* (p.24-25).

Table 1. Grasha-Riechmann Student Learning Style Scales

Style	Preferences
Independent	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prefers to work alone 2. Not interested in discussion and other learner interaction 3. Not interested in team work
Dependent	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Looks to instructor and learners as guide 5. Prefers an authority figure to tell them what to do 6. Prefers highly structured environment
Competitive	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Interested in learning for reward and recognition 8. Prefers exams to projects
Collaborative	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Learns by sharing and cooperating with instructor and learners 10. Prefers group work discussions
Avoidant	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. Not excited about attending class and discussion 12. Uninterested 13. Overwhelmed
Participative	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 14. Interested in class activities and discussion 15. Works hard 16. Wants to meet instructor's expectation



These preferences of learning styles vary from one student to other students. Moreover in fully online learning, teachers should have to create strategies to accommodate these different learning styles by designing learning activities that providing learners to engage and participate comfortably in the learning process.

3. STUDY DESCRIPTION

Participants

This study was conducted in three classes in a private university in Bandung. The participants are 88 university students who are learning General English as an obligatory course. The numbers are 50 female and 38 male students.

Instruments and Method

The instrument of data collection method is by employing a simple set of questionnaire. The questionnaire used in this study is close ended questions. Criteria of the questionnaire are based on the criteria of six categories of social styles by Grasha (1966)- *Independent-dependent, competitive-collaborative, and avoidant-participative*, comprising of sixteen questions and the questionare was administered to the students at the end of the 2nd semester in May 2021. A qualitative research method is employed in this study since the researcher wants to explore deeply to generate data rich embedded in the context. Questionnaire was the main source of data collection.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data from questionnaire used to identify social styles of online learners taking General English, as an obligatory course in three classes in a private universities are indicated in table 2, follows;

Table 2 Learners' social styles

Preferences	(N)	(%)	Style
(1) Prefers to work alone	41	46.6	
(4) Look to instructor and learners as guide	47	53.3	Dependent
(2) Not interested in dicussion and other learner interaction	29	33	
(5) Prefers an authority figure to tell them what to do	59	67	Dependent
(3) not interested in team work	35	39.7	
(6) prefers highly structured environment	53	60.2	Dependent
Dependent	159	60	
Independent	105	40	
(7) Interested in learning for reward and recognition	21	23.9	
(9) learns by sharing and cooperating with instructor and learners	67	76.1	Collaborative
(8) Prefers exams	38	43.2	



(10) Prefers projects	50	56.8	Collaborative
Competitive	59	34	
Collaborative	117	66	
(11) Not excited about attending class and discussion	17	19.3	
(14) Interested in class activity and discussion	71	80.1	Participative
(12) uninterested	10	11.4	
(15) works hard	78	88.6	Participative
(13) overwhelmed	24	27.3	
(16) wants to meet instructor's expectation	64	72.7	Participative
Avoidant	51	19	
Participative	213	81	

The table. 2 shows that the criteria of number 1,4,2,5,3,6 indicate learners' preference to be dependent or independent styles in online class, whereas the criteria of 7,9,8,10 show preference to be competitive or collaborative styles, while the criteria of 11,14, 12,15, 13,16 indicate as avoidant or participative styles. The data show that most learners from three classes prefer to be dependent-collaborative and participative as their social styles in online class.

The result from number 1,4,2,5,3,6 indicates that learners' preference to be more dependent rather than independent in online class. The finding reveals that the learners show their preference to be dependent in online learning are 60% and those to be independent are 40%. This means that learners who are dependent prefer their teacher to provide learning activities that give little choice for them. They prefer following a set of structured activities with due dates and learning with a set of structured of moduls. It is different from learners who own independent learning styles. They will prefer working individually and being uninterested in discussion.

The result from number 7,9,8,10 shows that most learners tend to be more collaborative rather than competitive in online class. The finding shows that learners who show their preference to be collaborative in online learning are 66% and those to be competitive are 34%. This means mostly learners prefer working in a group and doing projects and interacting with other learners. The rest of learners have a competitive learning style that prefer exams to measure their ability.

The result from number 11,14,12,15,13,16 demonstrates that most learners prefer to be more participative rather than avoidant in online class. The finding shows the number of learners showing their preferences to be participative in online class are 81% and 19% for avoidant learning style. This means that mostly learners prefer actively present in online class and nterested in class activities and discussion.



5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Learning styles preferred by learners play an important role to help them to learn both in a face to face class and an online class. Specific social styles preferred by online learners should be taken into consideration by teachers when designing learning activities. The finding in the present study in the three classes of online learners taking General English, social styles of online learners show learners' preference dominantly as dependent, collaborative and participative. In conclusion that a variety of learning activities needed to be designed and adjusted to social styles that are preferred by online learners in order that these learning activities not only can accommodate specific social styles of online learners, but also provide them opportunities to new ways of learning. Therefore, it is highly suggested that teachers must be well-prepared with a variety of learning activities that accommodate social styles of online learners.

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