



Research Article

A SURVEY OF ENGLISH MAJOR JUNIORS' ACTIVE VERSUS PASSIVE LEARNING STYLES AT BVU

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ABSTRACT

This paper aim is to find out the learning ways that second-year students at BVU are studying in order to suggest an acceptable learning style to students. The results present that over a half students (57%) study in passive ways whilst (43%) of students study in active ways. Another result also shows that nearly a half students still limit on using English when graduated.

INTRODUCTION

Viet Nam higher education is facing with intense challenges both in local areas and foreign countries. Therefore, to improve the quality of education is a prior solution of a higher education institution in order to build the beautiful scenery and attract learners. In the higher education criteria, the training and evaluating criteria are crucial. They are the issues that many educators have presented various teaching and learning approaches to help teachers and students get an acceptable way in their teaching or learning. Generally, the similarity of teaching and learning approaches is not only to emphasize the input process rather than the outcome, but to get better the quality of education. For the above issues, the author wonders how learners study effectively, and whether or not they alone adopt traditional passive learning to get, discover and use information rather than cooperate with other students to obtain information by active learning styles. Many researchers argue that passive learning styles are more effective than active learning styles. They give their reasons for their opinion that many learners, who have completely succeeded in studying and achieved the peak results in national and international examinations even though they are not enough good teachers,

laboratory equipment or interactions with instructors or classmates, whereas a large number of educators emphasize the importance of active learning. If students are active both inside and outside classes, they will enable to develop their skills and talents. Because of the different views and experiences, the author surveys junior English major students to see their learning tendency whether passive learning or active learning styles.

Aims of Research

The main purpose of this paper is to find out the trend of second-year students' learning styles, whether they study by active or passive ways. End of this, the results will help the author do a further experimental research these methods on students of Foreign Languages Department at Ba Ria-Vung Tau University (BVU) to consider an acceptable method for students at BVU. On the other hand, the results of this paper help teachers understand the different learning ways and plan the ways of teaching effectively. Therefore, this paper was guided by the ensuing questions:

- How do second-year students learn English? In the term of using active and passive learning styles, do the students use active learning outnumber passive learning?
- Are the students' learning ways effective?

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Active Learning

There is a brief comparison between active leaning and passive learning. Active learning is a broadly concept, used to describe many approaches of instruction that help students responsible for their own learning. It is a process that students engage in doing things and thinking about what they are doing in classroom, Bonwell and Eison (1991). Students not only join several activities with their partners to discuss, share, and cooperate in completing a task, game, quiz, role-play, etc, but they also improve their feedback, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Active learning includes experiential learning, brain-training, and urging learners to ask questions, problem-based learning, and participative learning. Experiencing learning is a term in which students learn from acceptable experience in the course of instruction, Kolb (1984). Since learning is a process, not an outcome, management educators emphasize the combination between learners and their environment and knowledge creation within learning process. Brain-training is an approach that students' brain needs to link what they are being taught with what they already know and how they already think and learn. It means that learners need to be tested on the information, repeat it or explain it to other learners so as to store it into their memory. In contrast, in passive learning, the student's brain doesn't save what has been presented. It may be stay in temporary memory for a short time but never makes it into permanent memory, Mel Selberman (2006).

Urging learners to ask questions is also the act of learning to help the brain start working. When students ask questions, they are in a seeking mode rather than a passive mode. Their brains are reacted to obtain answers rather than merely logging in. when learners read some information and come to it with few questions, their brains treat the information superficially. However, when they are trying to find out something, their brains treat the information carefully, Mel Selberman (2006). Another approach is problem-based learning in which expresses a stimulus to thinking, Miller (2004). He suggested students must learn the basic principles of a subject then discover how to solve the problem in the subject. In participative learning, learners are suggested to work together in a small group in order that learners can learn as much from each other as they can learn from you. Participative learning is also called group learning, cooperative learning, team learning, or collaborative learning. This approach has many benefits. Learners bond with their learning partners that may motivate the team sustain cooperative learning activities through challenging assignments. When they study in groups, they take responsibility for themselves development because they have a sense of ownership and social support. They also develop their social skills: they know how to interact, communicate and help other students.

Passive Learning

Traditional or passive learning is also predominant although students do not actively participate in working with others or share their views together. They just concentrate on listening to instructors, looking at presentations, reading books and doing tasks that their teachers instruct them. They quietly and alone take in new information and they only contribute to lectures after they are suggested. In this approach, the teacher might easily achieve his lesson's aim except for students. The result

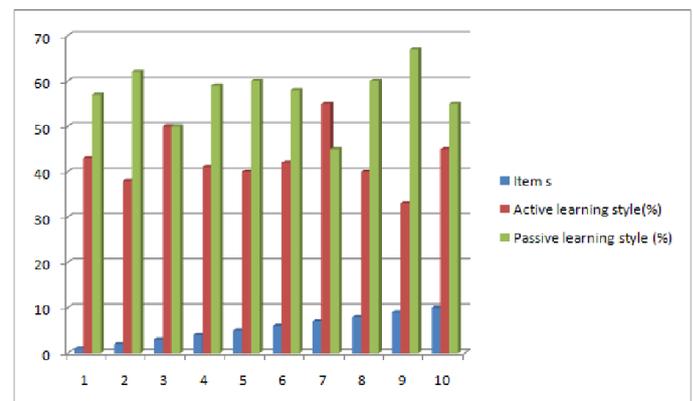
from this is not enough two-way communication between the teacher and students in classroom. Therefore, the teacher isn't aware of students' problems and students' understanding of the lesson's content without verbal feedback. Passive learning is considered good for competitive learning. When one student goal is achieved, all other students fail to reach that goal, Johnson (1991). It means that the learning or achievement of one student is separate from the achievements of the other students in the same class. If students study like this, they can get various results or scores because of their isolating working or non-interacting with other students. Generally, students study in many different ways: some just listen and think, some discuss with their partners, some focus on principles or application to solve problems, some try to remember or understand lessons, etc., Felder & Soloman (2004).

Research Design

The participants in this research consisted of 84 second-year students at BVU. They majored in English. Questionnaire adapted from Felder and Solomon's (2004) *learning style questionnaire known as Index of Learning Styles* to clarify students' learning styles. The author used 10 out of 44 questions to examine in table 1.

RESULTS

Question 1: How do second-year students learn English? In the term of using active and passive learning styles, do the students use active learning outnumber passive learning?



The chart Percentage of students' learning styles

A glance at the column provides a comparison between active and passive learning styles. It is evident that passive learning styles outnumber active learning styles, nearly a half (43%) students study active ways. The proportions of these learning ways are quite different for active and passive learning styles, at 43% and 57% respectively. It means that the significant number of students (57%) have a natural tendency to receive and process information by watching something in the external world, listening and thinking it carefully, working alone. According to individualistic instruction, learners prefer to think about new information before acting on it, whereas Kolb (1984) stated that active learners study well in situations that help them do something physical, so the more opportunities for students both take part in doing something, the better they will study new things. Moreover, Felder and Soloman (2004) also cited that giving students a chance to work in groups, they will feel active to find ways to do something and retain it better.

Table 1.

Items	Questionnaires	Styles	
		Answer A (active ways)	Answer B (passive ways)
1	I understand something better after I ____ (a) try it out (b) think it through		
2	When I am learning a new subject, I prefer to ____ (a) stay focused on that subject, learning it with my partners. (b) stay focused on that subject, learning it alone.		
3	I would rather first ____ (a) try it out. (b) think about it carefully before doing.		
4	When I am learning something new, it helps me to (a) talk about it. (b) think about it.		
5	When I think about what I did yesterday, I am most likely to present by ____ (a) words (b) pictures in mind		
6	In a study group working on difficult material, I am more likely to ____ (a) jump in and contribute ideas (b) sit back and listen		
7	At home, I spend much more time studying ____ (a) speaking and writing skills (b) listening and reading skills		
8	Before doing a test, I usually review lessons ____ (a) with friends (b) alone		
9	In classroom, when I don't understand something I usually ____ (a) ask my teacher (b) ask my partners		
10	When I think something up, I usually ____ (a) talk it with friends (b) write it down		

The table: Learning style questions by Felder & Soloman (2004)

Since communication in such situations is by the human voice, and there is immediate, spontaneous, often emotionally motivated interaction between the teacher and students, and usually between students and other students. The element in teaching and learning environment is often called social interaction, a relationship which assumes no delay in communication, no distance of space or time, between teachers and students engaged in the social business of education. In item 9, a large majority of students (67%) would rather ask their partners than they ask the teacher in classroom. This result shows a limit on the relationship between the teacher and students that may cause the students to fail in their studying.

Question 2: Are the students' learning ways effective?

According to the annual statistics of BVU, the number of students who graduated with rather good degrees approximately 45%, and minority of students (10%) reached good degrees. From these results, it is obvious that passive learning styles are not completely effective in learning English.

Conclusions

The results suggested that passive learning styles still some limitation on learning English, so active learning styles may have a greater positive impact on students' learning.

In order to draw further conclusions, a further research is especially needed concerning the effectiveness of active learning styles on helping students at BVU study English better. The author also suggested that if there is an experimental research, the author should design clearly types of activities as active learning because active and passive learning exercises are not always exactly clear.

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