

Using Vark in Teaching Idioms to Iraqi EFL Students

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Abstract

The major goal of this research is to determine the impact of using the Vark learning style to teach idioms to Iraqi EFL university students. To fulfill the study's goal, the Vark learning style tactics and features were presented as a style for teaching Iraqi EFL idioms, with the goal of determining if there is a statically significant difference in the experimental group's achievement and the control group's achievement in the posttest. In fact, there is a large disparity in the degrees of recognition and productivity. The study's sample consists of 35 EFL Iraqi students in their 3rd year at the Department of English, College of Education Ibn Rushd- University of Baghdad (18 students in the experimental group and 17 students in the control group). The two groups were given a number of texts containing idioms to study for two weeks. The experimental group was taught using the Vark learning style, whereas the control group was taught using standard techniques. The researcher next conducted an accomplishment posttest as well as validation in order to apply the findings to the two groups. The gathered data demonstrated that there is a substantial difference between the mean accomplishment scores in the posttest between the two groups, with the experimental group prevailing. i.e., the experimental group's performance in English idioms is much higher than the control group's.

Keywords: Vark learning style, English Idioms, achievement, EFL students

أستخدام أسلوب فارك في تدريس المصطلحات للطلبة العراقيين دارسي اللغة الانكليزية لغة أجنبية

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المخلص

أن الهدف الرئيسي من هذا البحث هو لتحديد أثر استخدام أسلوب فارك لتدريس المصطلحات للطلبة العراقيين دارسي اللغة الانكليزية لغة أجنبية. من أجل تحقيق هذا الهدف تم استخدام تكتيكات و ميّزات أسلوب فارك لتدريس المصطلحات للطلبة العراقيين دارسي اللغة الانكليزية لغة أجنبية لمعرفة فيما إذا كان هناك فرق ذو دلالة أحصائية في الأنجاز ما بين المجموعة التجريبية و المجموعة الضابطة. في الحقيقة يوجد هناك تباين كبير في درجات التمييز و الإنتاج لكلا المجموعتين. تألفت عينة الدراسة الحالية على 35 طالب و طالبة للمرحلة الثالثة في قسم اللغة الانكليزية-كلية التربية -ابن رشد -جامعة بغداد (18 طالب للمجموعة التجريبية و 17 طالب للمجموعة الضابطة). تم تدريس المجموعة التجريبية وفق أسلوب فارك لتدريس المصطلحات الانكليزية بينما تم تدريس المجموعة الضابطة

وفق الطريقة التقليدية لتدريس المصطلحات . أظهرت النتائج بوجود تباين أو اختلاف جوهري في متوسط درجات الاختبار البعدي للمجموعة التجريبية و المجموعة الضابطة و لصالح المجموعة التجريبية و بمعنى آخر كان أداء المجموعة التجريبية في تعلم المصطلحات الأنكليزية أعلى من أداء المجموعة الضابطة.

الكلمات المفتاحية : أسلوب فارك التعليمي , المصطلحات الأنكليزية , الأنجاز , الطلبة العراقيين دارسي اللغة الأنكليزية لغة أجنبية

Introduction

Learning a language means completely learning a new language; it is not an easy task. It requires learning a new culture, a new way of thinking, feeling and acting. A lot of EFL students face a sort of difficulty in comprehending the texts, to be more specific, in comprehending idioms. That's why, understanding idioms is not that easy for EFL students. In fact, it sometimes represents an issue and obstacle that other students may struggle with (Cacciari and Tabossi, 1988: 68).

In this respect, it becomes necessary to find a new and developed techniques and strategies for teaching English idioms for EFL students. The Vark learning style may provide the students with the ability to comprehend and understand idioms in much better ways than the traditional methods. Hence, the study is an attempt to examine the role of Vark learning style in teaching idioms to EFL university students. The following pages are devoted to the presentation of learning style, Vark learning style, idioms, etymology of idioms and idioms in English to provide the theoretical background for the paper.

Learning Style: Definition

Learning style simply indicates a method of learning that an individual or an institution uses in the learning process. Jantan and Razali (2002) state that what learning style means in psychology is the method students focus and the way they comprehend new information or experiences. Cognitively, learning style is about the different means of creating perceptions and processing information to create concepts (Fleming & Baume 2006). According to Lebar and Mansor (2000), the style of learning is simply a chosen strategy to be applied by individuals or students during their study. This includes the students' ability and preparation to receive and process information, but not learning skills.

Yaakub and Hashim (2004), on the other side, provide a totally different point of view by defining learning as something physical and spiritual. They describe it as a process which can create a change in the behaviours and the manner of the individual and has a continuous and consistent developing effect. Relationally, Mok (2003), defines learning style as merely approach for learning chosen by students. On the other hand, Drago and Wagner (2004) introduce the term learning style as differences showed by students when they choose a certain learning method. To have a clear picture of learning style consider the following figure:

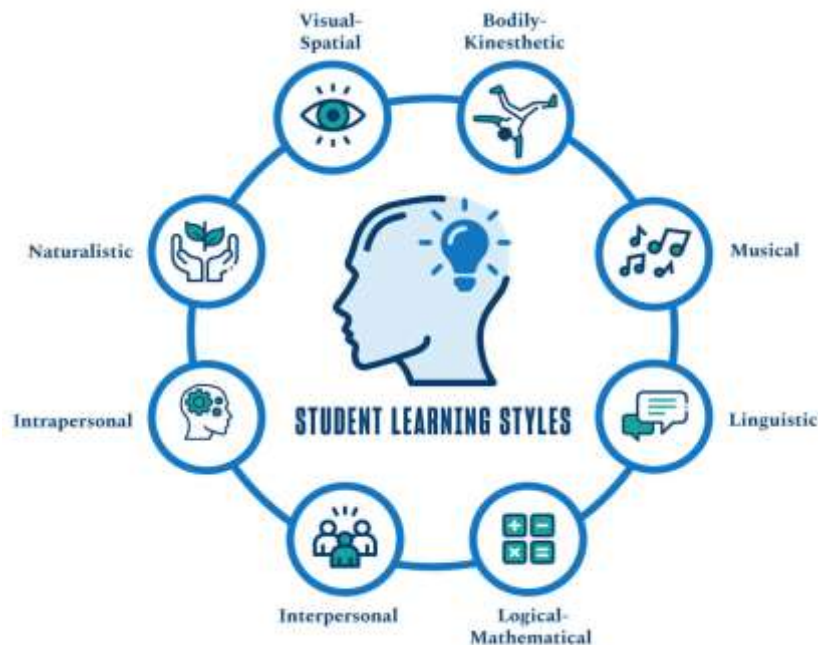


Figure 1: Student Learning Styles

VARK "Visual, Aural, Reading or Write and Kinesthetic"

Learning style is defined as "a cognitive, affective, and psychological factor that influences how people interact with and respond to the learning environment" (Duff, 2000:123). Sometimes, students focus more on the learning technique, which might indicate that they have a unique learning style (Yusoff 2007). Wintergerst contends (in Yusoff 2007) that some people have numerous learning styles. This aligns with Friedel and Rudd's (in Yusoff 2007) viewpoint, which suggests that each individual may have several learning styles, referred to as bimodal learning styles. Those with many learning styles will benefit more since their viewpoints will be defined by flexibility and acceptance of their learning environment.

A variety of additional learning styles have also been established in other research. Salmes, Dunn & Dunn, Felder-Silverman, Honey and Murnford, and Kolb, for example, present models built by previous scholars, such as learning styles models. VARK (Visual, Aural, Read or Write, and Kinesthetic) is one of these activities-based learning styles. According to the Malaysian Education Ministry (MEM) (2008), there are two primary learning style models: Dunn and Dunn and VARK.

"Learning style that has been modified from VAK model to VARK learning style by Fleming in 2006," according to the VARK learning style model. Students are divided into four different modes in this learning technique. These four modalities are based on several senses, such as vision, hearing, reading, and kinaesthetic. As a result, the model name was created by combining the initial letters of these four

modes (V, A, R, and K). According to Ismail (2010), it is vital to segregate students by mode in order to assess the efficiency of each session on various VARK learning modes.

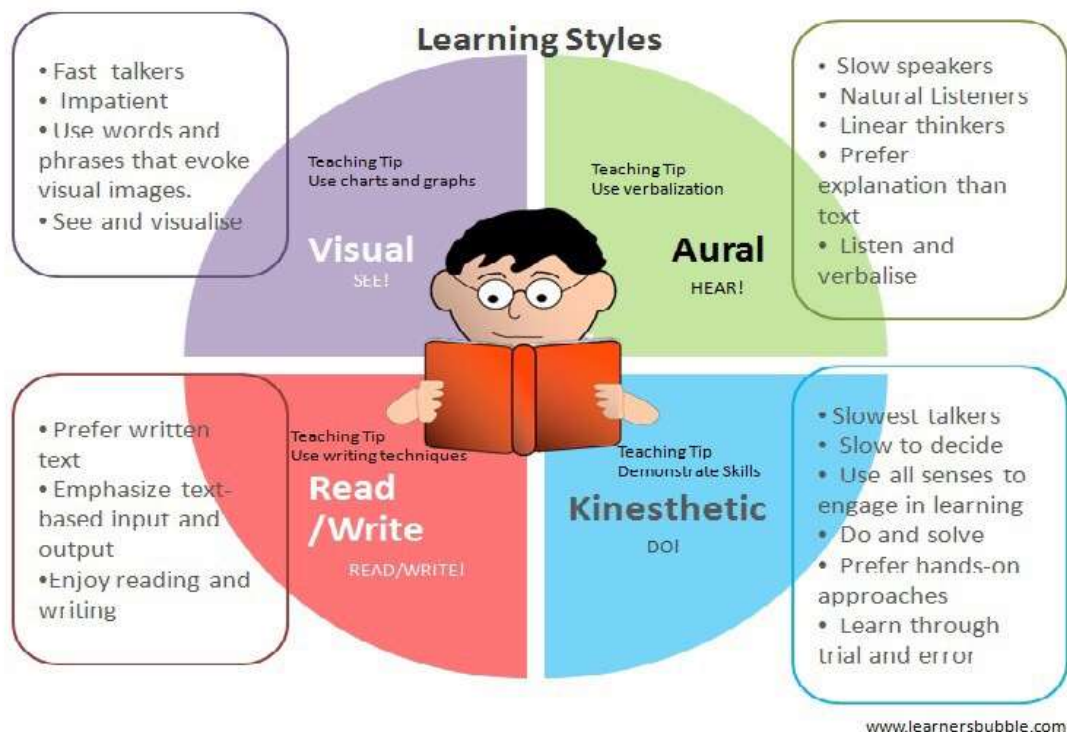


Figure 2: Learning Styles

Idioms in English

English language study involves a crucial aspect which is the study of English idioms. These idioms tend to carry some criteria, syntax and semantics. English idioms, an essential aspect of English because native speakers, tend to employ them in their daily conversations to carry different messages. Speakers who are non-natives would face punch difficulties in understanding and realizing them. The students' difficulty of understanding and using idioms can be ascribed to the fact that their meanings cannot be predicted from the parts they form. In most cases, students resort to dictionaries or their teachers to identify the meanings of idioms. What makes the issue more complicated is that idioms have unique syntactic and semantic behaviour. In addition, in order to get used to idioms, students are required to practice the use of idioms in contexts.

Etymology of English Idioms

Crystal (2003: 167) portrays etymology as "a concept historically used to research the origin and history of word form and sense." Centuries prior, about 300 dialects families have been categorized within the world concurring to the

resemblance among them. An additional legacy is the one of the family of Germanic. It is considered the origin of a large number of languages which exist nowadays such as Dutch, German and English. We cannot consider each word utilized in English, inferred from the same heritage. Be that as it may, clients of the dialect regularly borrow words or expressions from other dialects. The word expression is determined from Latin which has a place to the Endo-European family (Jackson and Amvela, 2007: 21).

Methodology

Experimental Design

What is meant by experimental design is a series of procedures that allows the researchers to check the truth of his hypotheses by reaching a conclusions that is related to dependent and independent variables and their connection with each other (Best and Khan, 2006:177). In the current study, the researcher adopted a posttest achievement test and as follows:

- 1- A random approach is used to choose two groups of pupils, which are then separated into control and experimental groups.
2. Both of the groups were taught the suggested materials for two weeks.
3. The control group was taught using standard techniques, whereas the Vark style of learning was used for the control group.
4. The two groups then tested using posttest.
5. Employing statistical tools to employ them for the analysis of the data and to gain the final results.

"Table 1: Experimental Design of the Study"

"The Group"	"Independent variable"	Posttest
"Experimental group"	"Vark learning style"	Posttest
"Control group"	"Traditional methods "	Posttest

Face Validity

What is meant by face validity is that "A test is face valid if it appears to be measuring what it claims to measure". "It is the best type of validity in the case of self- rating" (Kline, 2013:53). After completing the test items, the jury was tasked with determining their legitimacy. The jury members were chosen based on their experience in the field of education. The jurors was instructed by the researcher to identify and inspect the test items before making a judgement on whether or not the test items are appropriate. As a result, some articles had to be eliminated and others had to be changed. The legitimacy of the test items has been validated by the majority of the jury members.

The Sample

The sample that has been chosen for the current study consists of (35) students. Those students are at the third stage in the Department of English. In order to fulfil

the aims of the study, those thirty-five students are divided into two groups. Eighteen of them are selected to be the experimental group where they were taught using Vark learning style. The other seventeen students were selected to be the control group where the traditional methods are used to read the materials in the English language.

Data Analysis

"The Difference between the Two Groups' Mean Scores in the Achievement Post-test"

To see if there was a significant difference in the accomplishment post-test mean scores between the two groups (experimental and control), the mean scores of the two groups were gathered and compared. The experimental group's mean score is 39.35, whereas the control group's mean score is 25.13, according to the statistical analysis. For the two groups, the T-test formula was used, and the results indicated that the t-value was 7.35 at the level of significance (0.05). As a consequence, the findings suggest and verify that there is a considerable difference in accomplishment between the two groups, favoring the experimental group. As a result, the first hypothesis of the study, that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental and control groups in the posttest, is rejected.

Table (4.1): Statistical Analysis of the Achievement of the Two Groups in the Test

Group	No. Of Students	Mean scores	Standard deviations	T-Values	Level of significance
Experimental group	18	39.35	6.32	7.35	0.5
Control group	17	25.13	8.40		

Comparison between Experimental group Achievement in Pre-test and Post-Test

In the pre-test, the experimental group's accomplishment was 14.30, whereas in the post-test, it was 30.15. A t-test formula was used to determine whether there was a difference in accomplishment between the two dependent samples in the pretest and posttest for the two instances. The computed t-value is 15.30, and the threshold of significance is (0.05), indicating that students' post-test performance is significantly higher than their pre-test performance. As a result, the second hypothesis, stating that no significant difference exists between the mean scores of the experimental group's achievement in the pre-test and post-test, is rejected.

"Table (4.2) Experimental Group's mean scores and T-value at the pre-test and post-test"

Experimental group	No. of students	X	Standard deviations	D.F	T-values	Significance level
Pretest	18	14.30	2.11	30	15.30	0.5
Posttest		30.15	5.30			

Conclusions

The following are the key findings derived from the data analysis.

1. The experimental group's achievement is significantly higher than the control group's, demonstrating that using the Vark learning approach improves students' idiom understanding.
2. Teaching students English idioms using Vark learning style seems to help students in improving their comprehension of idioms.
3. The use of Vark learning style strategies can provide the students' ability to comprehend and use idioms and consequently raise their motivation, confidence and performance.
4. Employing Vark in the classroom can in fact increase and enhance the social interaction between the students. This can be ascribed to the fact that this learning style allows them to be part of the reading comprehension of idioms and sharing information and participate in solving and answering questions.
5. The use of Vark learning style improves the students' understanding of the idioms and helps them organize, analyse their features and kinds in much better ways.

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