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PAPER

A Comparative Study of ESL Learning and Teaching styles

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This study is an attempt to investigate the most favored learning style and the most commonly used teaching style of ESL (English as a Second Language) teachers to investigate whether there is a mismatch between the two. Domino (1979) found that college students taught in preferred learning styles scored higher on tests, fact knowledge, attitude, and efficiency than those taught in instructional styles different from their preferred styles. Since there is a dearth of empirical research pertaining to the learning styles and teaching styles in Sri Lanka, the paramount importance of this study is to fill that void and to investigate whether the mismatch between teaching and learning style brings learning failure.

The objective of this research is to suggest pedagogical interventions that can be adopted to incorporate various teaching styles in the ESL classroom other than practicing traditional teaching methodologies. This research comprises 125 undergraduates of the Faculty of Humanities. After distributing the questionnaire, 90 kinesthetic students whose most favored learning style is kinesthetic, were taken as the sample. Their knowledge was tested by giving them a pre test paper. After that, the sample of 90 students was divided into 3 groups of 30 students in each (K1, K2, and K3) and each group was taught differently: visually, kinesthetically and using an auditory style. After the teaching session a post test was given to them to check their acquired knowledge.

Another questionnaire was distributed among the lecturers in the ELTU and the Modern Languages Department of the University of Kelaniya to find out the most commonly used teaching style among the university lecturers. The results of the study highlight that the most commonly used teaching style is auditory teaching whereas kinesthetic style is the most preferred learning style among the students. Therefore, this study demonstrates that the best learning outcome occurs when the teacher matches the teaching style with the learning style.