

Distinct Individuals' Approaches in Obtaining English Language: A Study on University Kurdish Learners

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Abstract

Language has a basic role in the matter of communication, and this will separate human being from any other species. In addition, the ability to understand student learning styles can increase the educational experience; moreover, the styles to learn any language may take a lot of time and may change according to different educational and social backgrounds to learn a target language. Furthermore, the different learning styles may fit with different learners; each learner could choose a style which is compatible with personal preference; as it makes it easy for teachers to incorporate them into their teaching. Moreover, different learning styles may vary in different educational background; some learners pay attention to all the styles equally, whilst some others just to a specific style. Additionally, there are different learning styles, but the most popular ones are visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic in which STUDENTS take in information. This study is an analysis of learning styles for Eastern EFL students, especially Kurdish. The purpose of this study is to increase faculty awareness and understanding of the effect of learning styles on the teaching process.

Index terms— language, learning styles, effective teaching and learning, personal preference, kurdish classes, major and minor styles, individual choice and desire

1 I. Introduction

Earning Target Language (TL) is considered as a difficult challenge of life that one has to undertake. As a result, personal style has an enormous effect on mastering TL. Recently, learning styles (LS) have been notably growing in the field of second/foreign languages learning. The area has an important role in improving learners' satisfaction and accomplishment. Moreover, Curry (1983:4) grouped LS under three categories: Learning style as instructional preference, learning style as information-process style and learning style as cognitive personality style. However, according Author: Assistant Lecturer Department of English, College of Education, Charmo University Chamchamal -As-Sulaymaniyah -Kurdistan. e-mail: hibalboa@yahoo.com to ??leming (2001: 126) are Visual, Auditory, Tactile and Kinaesthetic.

The aim of the paper is to find out those styles that learners, especially Kurdish, prefer them to learn a new language. The idea can be expanded through the arguments of different scholars and their findings. Furthermore, cognitive awareness and psychology of the learners has an influential role in choosing the specific style.

The article wants to identify major types of LS and illustrate the arguments that have been said. Moreover, indicate the best LS for different types of learners according to different experiments that have been conducted by several scholars.

2 II.

3 Definitions of the Concept

Learning styles refer to the preferred way of learning TL, which have been chosen by different individuals. Besides, personal variables, socio-cultural and educational backgrounds have the indirect role on learning TL. Furthermore, LS will not lead to improvement in learning new ideas; unless students perform LS through activities for a better outcome. As a result, learning should be based on encouraging students to do LS activities. The learners do not need to learn abstract information, but they want to work with it practically. Furthermore, learning styles became the focus point of cognitive psychology of individuals. Individual differences are another impact on LS and educational instruction, while many scholars interrelated LS and individuals to each other. The term according to Sadler-Smith (1996: 32) is an outstanding behaviour that learners use to acquire a new task.

In his research, Adams (2002: 145) illustrates that when different LS share a common multicultural classroom, then the clash will produce between different learning needs. Consequently, it will be problematic when teachers separate different stereotypes to direct the LS towards their students. As Reid ((1998: 107) cited in Adams (2002: 235)) explains that LS is an inner based diagnosing; often it is not used by the learners consciously. Moreover, ??xford (2003: 22) described the idea as a familiar approach which is used by the students to learn a new language. Secondly, it is the manner in which learners use to process information and it clarifies the path of learning. Finally, it is the habit and strategies which individuals use to learn a new language (Pritchard, 2009). Another source by ??iding and Cheema ((1991: 186) cited in Srijongjai (2011: 33)) defined it as the way of cognitive style that deals with many components, which are not mutually unshared.

4 III. Types of the Learning Styles

Illustrating different LS may vary, whilst they will depend on different ages, proficiency levels and types of learning programmes. The suitable choice of LS is related to their personal preference to some extent, rather than an innate gift. Language learning should be based on different types of learners, as Nunan (1991: 45) divided learners into four major parts:

1. Concrete learners: They prefer visionary type.
2. Analytical learners: They prefer self-reliance and self-corrective.
3. Communicative learners: They prefer communication.
4. Authority-oriented learners: They prefer teacheroriented class and learn through vision.

Field Dependence (FD)/Independence (FI) theory is considered as another way of LS as Witkin et al. ??(1977: 87) cited in Liu and Reed (1994:62)) described FD as individuals who will learn globally and their learners are more sensitive and interactive. In contrast, FI are the learners who tend to learn more analytically and they are impersonal oriented.

Additionally, the ability to typify learners' LS will improve educational experience. This kind of development will expand their academic capabilities. As Chiya (2003: 4) mentioned some ways to identify learners' LS.

Firstly, according to "Kolb" learners are: i. Diverger: Learn from concrete experience. ii. Assimilator: Learn from reflective observation. iii. Converger: Learn from abstract conceptualization. iv. Accommodator: Learn from active experimentation.

While according to "Violand-Sanchez" are: i. Diverger: Learn from feeling. ii. Assimilator: Learn from watching and listening. iii. Converger: Learn from thinking. iv. Accommodator: Learn from doing.

Secondly, identification of the learners according to different categorization, of left and right brain mode function. Some scholars named them as Analytical vs. Rational, while others identified them as Field dependent and Field independent. First group is logical and analytical, but the second is relational and intuitive.

Finally, Perceptual LS by ??eid (1987: 107) ii. Sensing vs. Perception: Sensing learners learns better through the use of 5 senses. However, perception will learn through communicating and experience. iii. Thinking vs. Feeling: Those who have thinking personality will learn better in impersonal circumstances and logical consequences, while feeling will deal with the independent environment and social value. iv. Judging vs. Perceiving: Judging personality LS will learn through analyzing, but perceiving will learn through negotiation. v. Ambiguity-tolerant (AT) vs. Ambiguity-intolerant (AIT): AT will learn through opportunities and risk, whilst AIT will learn at a low-level risk and a more structured situation. vi. Left-brained (LB) vs. Right-brained (RB): LB is more visual. In the contrary, RB tends to be more auditory. Different LS will depend on different types of learners as mentioned previously. It is the way of learning that has been chosen by the learner. Additionally, learners are considered as well of information and they want to include only that information which is specific to learn a new context. Moreover, some learners use one of their senses, whilst some use more, as Pritchard (2009: 73) identified the learners according to "The Myers-Briggs Type Indicators" (MBTI) system different from the above classifications:

1. Extroverts: Try to learn new conceptions and focus on new ideas.
2. Introverts: Think to learn new ideas and focus on new information.
3. Sensors: They are more practical and focus on the facts and procedures.
4. Intuitors: They are imaginative and focus on meaning more.
5. Thinkers: They are sceptical and their decisions are based on logic and rules.
6. Feelers: They are appreciative and make decisions on humanistic considerations.
7. Judgers: They judge on what they see.

5 Perceivers:

Adapt their selves with the circumstances in which they live.

Based on the above classified learners, Fleming ((2001: 62) cited in Pritchard (2009: 79)) described the modes of LS as V-A-R-K system, which are:

? Visual: learn through seeing.

? Auditory: learn through hearing.

? Reading: learn through individual reading.

? Kinaesthetic: learn through touching.

Furthermore, Arthurs (2007: 5) described LS as models and she categorized in to 3 major parts:

Firstly, Kolb's model of experiential learning are LS which Chiya (2003: 82) explained it above.

Secondly, Fleming's and Mill's sensory are the LS that Pritchard (2009: 55) They prefer to use sound and music to learn. iii. Verbal (Linguistic) learners: They prefer to learn verbally. iv. Physical (Bodily-Kinaesthetic) learners: They work with pattern and logic. v. Social (Interpersonal) learners: They prefer to work in groups. vi. Solitary (Intrapersonal) learners: They want to depend on themselves when they learn, and they are more self-reliant and independent.

6 IV. Different Scholars' View on Teaching Different Learning Styles

Quite complex LS can be found in the work of Reid (1987: 89). However, her work is old, but still some writers are using it as a model. She conducted a study on a group of Arabs, Spanish, Japanese, Malay, Chinese, Koreans, Thai, Indonesians and English backgrounds. She took some samples of those countries. Firstly, (130) Japanese, (118) Korean and (130) Spanish participants were tested. The result showed that the Japanese learners did not have specific LS. In contrast, Koreans used visual, auditory, kinaesthetic and tactile. However, the Spanish learners preferred tactile and kinaesthetic on others. Additionally, Japanese and Spanish learners shifted and chose different styles for their minor choice, whilst Koreans chose only individual as their minor choice. Secondly, Arab, Similar to the Kurdish learners, learners prefer Moreover, some learners pay equal attention to all styles, because they are taught to pass in their class exams rather than use the language outside. They are regulated to some instructions, as a result no place will remain to use their experience. A source by Vermut (1996: 47) illustrates that it will be difficult for the students to prefer all language LS and functions. It is problematic for the learners to identify major and minor styles on their language materials.

Recently, in many western countries classes, Kurdistan as a part of them, are more teacher-oriented and the lessons are designed to be lectures rather than peer-works and the students are judged according to their accuracy rather than fluency. Consequently, teaching systems should be changed from its traditional style to a communicative approach, which is considered as the focal point in some Kurdish studies. A work by Chiya (2003: 83) illustrates some problematic issues in Japanese teaching and he said the classes are not a relaxed place for the students. Moreover, teachers do not pay much attention to the diversity of their students, because they are from the same culture, nationality and use the same language. Additionally, this can be supported by the work of Pinter et al. (2003: 103); they found that Russian EFL/ESL and Asian ESL, Kurdish and Arabic learners of English, prefer group work on individuals.

Furthermore, an experiment was conducted on a group of Iranian and Kurdish learners in Shiraz by Iazi and Riasati (2007: 120). The aim of the study was to specify different LS for different learners; in which the study took different nationalities into consideration. The (219) participants were between (14-44) years old and different levels of proficiency from both group of people (Kurdish and Persian). The result indicated that the students preferred communicative and inter-action approach. Firstly, the learners were asked if they prefer to work independently or work in a group, only 35.2% wanted to work individually, while the rest preferred group work. As a result, most of the learners thought that communicative approach is more productive than to work alone. Secondly, it has been concluded that the auditory approach was slightly preferred to reading by 10.9%.

Moreover, Chen (2009: 306) conducted a research on a group of (480) Taiwanese high school students. However, only (390) participants' answers were valid for the study. The data was collected based on Perceptual LS Preference Questionnaire (PLSPQ) and the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). The result concluded that (147) students preferred group LS, (103) preferred kinaesthetic, (59) preferred auditory, (29) preferred visual, (27) preferred individual and (25) preferred tactile.

In addition, Uralic et al. (2009: 108) made an experiment on (74) female and (86) male participants at the university of Tenaga National/Malaysia (UNITEN).

The result showed that most of the students preferred kinaesthetic and the least preferred visual, auditory and group LS. However, they had negative preference for individual and tactile. Different genders showed different results, males admired kinaesthetic and auditory more than the female gender. Furthermore, through the study it can be concluded that different ethnic backgrounds will choose different LS. Indian students chose visual and auditory as their major choice, while it was a minor for Chinese and negative for Malay students. Moreover, tactile was a minor choice for both Indian and Chinese, whilst negative for Malay. Additionally, kinaesthetic was a major choice for both Chinese and Malay, but it was a minor for Indian. Besides, group learning was reported

as a minor choice for both Malay and Indian, whilst it was major for the Chinese. Finally, Malay and Chinese chose individual learning as a minor choice. By contrast, it was major for Indian.

A source by Omanelli et al. (2009: 6) concluded from a survey on (??6) first year pharmacy students at the University of Kentucky that the majority of the learners preferred accommodator (36.2%), converger (22.4%), diverger (21.6%) and assimilator (19.8%) respectively.

Further support can be found in the work of Gündüz and Özcan (2010: 8) who conducted a survey in Nicosia at Near East University. The study consisted of 450 (150 Turkish, 150 Cypriot and 150 Arab and Kurdish) participants who were (300) male and (150) female. The experiment has been made to reveal the effect of different ethnic background on LS. The result concluded that Cypriot learners are more reflective. By contrast, Turkish, Arabs and Kurdish are more impulsive. However, Kurdish, Arabs and Cypriot learn better through the use of sensing LS, but all the learners learned verbally and not visually. Furthermore, Turkish learners learned analytically; Kurdish, Arabs and Cypriot learned more globally.

In addition, LS in Iranian universities have been ignored and considered as an unimportant issue Bidabadi and Yamat (2010: 221). Bidabadi and Yamat (2010: 224) conducted a study on a group of (37 male and 55 female) EFL Kurdish-Iranian, East Kurds, freshmen learners. The participants were tested to choose the best of LS in learning a new language. The result revealed that most of the learners preferred visual and auditory on the other LS, and most of the students considered themselves as communicative learners. The mean of the result were (3.24, 3.10, 3.07 and 3.02) for Communicative, authority-oriented, concrete and analytical LS respectively. The result concluded that the students do not have any other LS, except interacting or communicating with others to learn TL.

Scholars have been discussed the LS over the years deciding which classes suit the students more. Many arguments about improvement of learners' skills, knowledge and the use of appropriate systems have been taken in to consideration. Many writers believed that individual differences and learners' learning are influenced by LS. Srijongjai (2011: 1549) conducted a study on (88) BA (Bachelors) students in the faculty of humanities in Srinakharin Wriot University/ Thailand. The age range was (19)(20)(21)(22) and (??6) male with (72) female. The students were divided into 3 different groups based on their low, medium and high proficiency levels. Questionnaires and a semi-structured interview were used as the instruments of testing to identify learners' LS. According to the result the tendencies students favoured social, aural, verbal, visual, physical and solitary respectively. However, the least preferred was logical. The study indicated that the majority of learners preferred social as their primary LS. Furthermore, the low and medium levels preferred aural, whilst the high level preferred verbal as their second choice. Overall, the study concludes that the most learners want to be social and aural learners, because they learn through interacting more effectively and easier. Collaborative classroom atmosphere will help the learners' performance. The writer explains that the importance of the LS will depend on the learners' outcome.

Due to the lack of enough sources on South, Iraq, and West, Syria, Kurdish; different sources have been collected on North, Turkey, and East, Iranian, Kurdish. The paper wanted to illustrate the basic and fundamental principles of LS based on different ethnic groups, ages, cultures, and educational background.

7 V. Conclusion

Learning styles are important in understanding TL. Through the paper, it can be concluded that, choosing different LS will depend on different types of students, because their choice for the right LS will help them to react with the TL quicker and easier. The specific choice of LS by learners has an efficient development in students' achievement. Additionally, the paper dealt with different types of LS and brought about several arguments by different scholars; different ages, ethnic backgrounds and educational systems should be accountable too to avoid problematic issues and diversity between learners.

Additionally, due to the lack of enough studies on Kurdish learners', in South part of Kurdistan, LS to achieve TL; Arabic, Iranian, and Turkish studies took part instead, because they have similar educational background and classroom management, to give almost similar LS to learn TL, which is English language. Choosing an appropriate type of LS may depend on the students' inner capability and the way to attract with the language. As a result, in sum, Kurdish learners may choose different styles according to the age and the class they learn the language; especially in choosing English as their second language.¹

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c) Environmental LS

i. Physical vs. Sociological: Physical learners will learn more effectively in different classroom variables, such as: sound, class size, temperature and chair arrangement, but sociological learners will learn better with communication and group work.

d) Personality LS

i. Extroversion vs. Introversion: Extroverts are interested in concrete experience and outside relationships,

whilst more
in-
tro-
verts

independent.

[Note: a) Cognitive LS i. FI vs. FD: FI are more analytical and learn step by step, whilst FD will learn through the context in general. ii. Analytic vs. Global: Analytics are individual learners. In contrast, global will learn through concrete experiment and they are more communicative. iii. Reflective vs. Impulsive: Reflective learners need time before responding. By contrast, impulsive respond directly. b) Sensory (Perceptual) LS i. Auditory LS learns through hearing. ii. Visual LS learns through seeing. iii. Tactile LS learns through touching. iv. Kinaesthetic LS learns through body movement. v. Haptic LS learns through body involvement and hearing.]

Figure 1:

Adams categorized LS, based on the above modes, into 6 types which are a bit different from Fleming's types, they are:

? Visual: Learn through eyes. (Seeing)

? Auditory: Learn through ears. (Hearing)

? Tactile: Learn through touch. (Hands-on)

? Kinaesthetic: Learn through complete body experience.

? Group: Learn through working in pairs.

? Individuals: Learn through working individually.

Additionally, knowing learners' LS will help them to develop faster. As a result, Srijongjai (2011: 1557) typed learners under different categories, such as:

i. Visual (Spatial) learners: They prefer the use of images and pictures to learn a new task.

ii. Aural (Auditory, musical and rhythmic) learners:

Figure 2:

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