LEARNING STYLES OF MIXED ABILITY LANGUAGE LEARNERS AND HOW TO DEAL WITH IT

Shaxnoza Tangirova Xusniddinovna
ESL/EFL teacher at Uzbekistan State World Languages University

Annotation

Particular attention is focused on finding out which learning style is more popular and which one is more effective. There have been a great many of research in terms of achieving native like proficiency. It is interesting to know that there might be some people who almost mastered their target language   while others cannot progress beyond a   beginner or elementary level. One possible reason could be learners are quite different from each other and it is natural that each one has their own styles which they   feel comfortable with. According to Cornet (1983) the language learning styles are the overall patterns that give general direction to learning behavior. In other words students learn differently from one another (Price, 1977) The term 'learning style' has been used to describe an individual's natural, habitual and preferred way of absorbing, processing, and retaining new information and skills (Reid 1995) At some point in our lives we have seen or heard people unless they see something , they may fail to comprehend better, such people can be described as "visual" learners, or some of your friends told you that they can remember rules or important information best only when they accomplish such tasks through role-plays or physical action, which can be called as "kinesthetic" type of learners. There are LLs who can learn best by hearing which falls into "aural" style of leaning. Brown (2000) states that unlike factors such as age, gender, motivation, aptitude learning styles role is to explain why some L2 learners are more successful than others is has not been fully explained yet. In this small scale research, I want to observe LLs' language acquisition process and their learning styles. Even though a good number of researches have been conducted into individual learner differences in SLA, very little known about more effective language acquirers' learning styles.

Keywords: Visual learners, auditory, visual, kinesthetic, language learners, teacher.

Introduction

As for the auditory learning style, people with this style learn best by hearing and listening. Learners can remember and comprehend things they have heard. Rather than writing instruction, spoken instruction can have a better effect. If we look at visual style, people may learn best by reading or seeing pictures and with the help of

visual activities more knowledge can be gained. Sometimes individuals with such style close their eyes in order to visualize or remember something.

I strongly believe that my case study will definitely make way for creating better and more effective teaching. What I mean by this is that once it is identified which learning style works best for LLs, teachers then can have developed appropriate materials according to the needs of students. Even though everyone has a specific learning style, it would yield better results if instructors divide learners according to their learning styles and overall level. If so, achieving goals will be sooner than expected as all students have a lot in common and it will increase the rate of learning.

Literature Review Advocates of Learning Style

Learning styles play an important role in learners' learning process. These days there is a significant varieties between   on the one hand university or colleges, on the other hand students. Thus is the reason why understanding of most preferable learning styles can make way for effective learning strategies for educators to implement in their own classroom (Lohri-Posey 2003) Knowledge of language student's learning styles has a significant role to play due to **(i) it assists the development of educating and acquiring process (Gómez & Gil, 2018), (ii) it helps to find solutions to the problems faced by individual learning differences of students (Haciomeroglu, 2016; Kulinna & Cothran, 2003), (iii) it creates room for academic performance (Kim et al., 2016) (iv) it can be beneficial for students to be guided** (Nixon et al., 2007) According to Kolb (1984) learning styles can be the results of genetic heritage, past experiences, and environmental expectations from other people. Knowing learners' learning styles may help teachers how to create methods in the learning teaching process environment (Akkoyunlu, 1995). Renzulli & Reis (1985) argue that only when children are taught taking into their capabilities, goals and ambitions, better effective outcomes can be obtained. Such children are in need of complex educational approaches which can not be provided with ordinary programs.Kolb (1984) claims that learning styles can be considered as special method which LL prefer to get and process the data personally. According to Kaplan and Kies (1995) learning styles can be fingerprints of every learner, such styles can come from birth and predispositionAt this point it is worth saying that on the one hand, realization of learning styles can increase the self-esteem of students, on the other hand, it might decrease educators' responsibility in terms of control. By doing so, such classes are considered to be learner-centered, rather than a teacher-centered, which means students are responsible for their own academic

outcome. As for teachers, their solo role will be facilitators(Gilajkani and Ahmadi, 2011).

Opponents of Learning Styles

Turning to the other side of the argument, however, not all researchers are enthusiastic about the concept of Learning Styles. Pashler (2016) claims that there is no convincing evidence on the potential of LSs. There is no down-to-earth evidence to support the role of learning styles in education, he adds. The utilization of insufficient technique is strongly linked with harm- students who are considered to have a distinguished LSs (auditory learners) might not choose other fields of professions (music, ballet dancer) due to perceptions of those areas are not just "for them". In addition to this, such cases may give a birth to develop a negative confidence in students' capabilities to acquire skills that they regard as matching their LSs. (Reiner and Willingham, 2010; Willingham et al., 2015) Another controversial point lies in the field of second language acquisition. Much research has been carried out in SLA so as to examine the correlation between achievement in SLA and learning styles. Findings show that very little has been identified in accordance with this relationship.(Ellis 2008). So, conclusions can be vague owing to the fact that there can be various different styles, methods assessing the use of it can be not concrete, little difference between style and personality in addition to level of intelligence (Riding 200).

Participant Profile

I have selected fifteen students ,in one of the private study centers in Tashkent, who are learning English as a foreign language and at the age of 14-21 with the exposure of English for at least a year. In order to yield concrete results, I paid a close attention to gender balance. Seven of them are females and the rest seven of them are males. Furthermore, I also took their L1 into account : all of them speak Uzbek language as native , dominant language. Moreover, I paid a close attention to the number of languages they speak.(Russian, English, Korean and basic Arabic)Only one fifth of them only know English, while the others are bilingual or trilingual. When it comes to their level of English, 9 of them are pre-intermediate (B1), on the other hand, the others are elementary (A2+).

Furthermore, the majority of the students told that they had been learning English for 2 years, some of them for 1 year and there is only one student who had been learning English for ess than a year. In terms of the ways that they learn English, it has been revealed that none of them had ever been abroad, rather they learn English in non native environment by attending English private courses, conversational clubs and

libraries. Most of them responded that they acquire English in a field depended way with a language instructor, while only a few of them told that they could learn a language without the assistance of a teacher as a field independent. As for the methods, it has been understood that the students use different methods to learn English language. Some of them told that they use grammar translation method along with total physical response (listening and acting,) others , however, mentioned that they learn best by audiolingual method (singing, listening, dialogues, memorization of phrases, drilling, inductive grammar, visual aids, pronunciation tasks. Another group of students claim that they prefer Natural method works for them best which involves mastering fluency, relaxing as much as possible in the classroom, sometimes oral sometimes written, working in small groups and games, commands. Nevertheless, only a couple of the students stressed out that they like and follow direct method in which they learn L2 with the help of L1(grammar is taught inductively, classroom instruction is undertaken by a target language, paying more attention to vocabulary and fluency). Looking into motivation, however, most of them share common ideas regarding it. Although 85% of my students emphasized that they have intrinsic motivation, due to the fact that they are learning English to get international certificates , namely , IELTS , which plays a key role in passing university exams for higher education, only 14 percent students told that they learn English for their personal interest, and want to mix with target culture which is integrative motivation. Lastly, I interviews them with the final challenging question : What helps them to learn a foreign language. Half of my LLs claimed that books and additional materials, one out of five students said that English news and podcasts , the rest told me that English movies with subtitles, songs, games help them acquire a language better.

I have been involved in teaching them for about a month. To my surprise, even though the have a lot in common in terms of culture, age, immersion , they have different level as well as learning styles. Therefore, I tried to make an attempt to observe their background knowledge of English at school, their weaknesses and strengths.

4. Research Design

In this section I made an attempt to gain data about the popularity of learning styles. The main aim of my case study is to find out if learning styles really exist and have an influence on language learning. Firstly, I selected eight questions which are dedicated to identifying students' learning styles where students had to choose one appropriate option which best reflected each of them. I demonstrate eight questions each of which deals with three sorts of learning styles: visual, kinesthetic and auditory. During the class, I asked my students to respond my questionnaire survey

which took only 10 minutes. Taking into some of my students' overall level, I provided them with a brief explanation of the assignment in order to make sure they know what they are doing. Sometimes I translated some unknown words for my students. Secondly, with a view to check how effective are learning styles, I designed a vocabulary progress test to check my students' knowledge. Firstly, as I had already divided students into three group according their learning styles, I taught vocabulary in separate groups. For Visual learners I demonstrated the words with pictures and videos on the big screen. I had them repeat and watch the video and pictures carefully. Next, for auditory learners I provided them with the pronunciation and audio version of the wordlist, I got my students to say it out loud many times. We also listened each other's saying using the new words. At but not least, as for the kinesthetic group, having explained the meaning of new words with the help of role plays and dialogues, I gave my test to my students to see how well they can remember and use it in communication. The questions were chosen from Academic Word List. A vocabulary test consisted of a) ten words in which students had to translate the words into their L1, b) four statements to check their comprehension for a coupe of words. By the first task, I intended to check how well my students can memorize the new words and know the translation in their native language. What I wanted to figure out with the second activity was to find out 1. the translation of the sentence using the vocabulary class they had, 2. to scale their comprehension of the words. How well they can understand and evaluate the situation. In this exercise, an attempt was made to grade students' knowledge according to the words such as approachable, assess, unassessed, reassess.

5. Data Collection and Analysis

The data collecting started from collecting the questionnaire The next thing that I did was I calculated the results according to their preferable learning styles. I counted the number of options who marked preferable situations in which they fit.
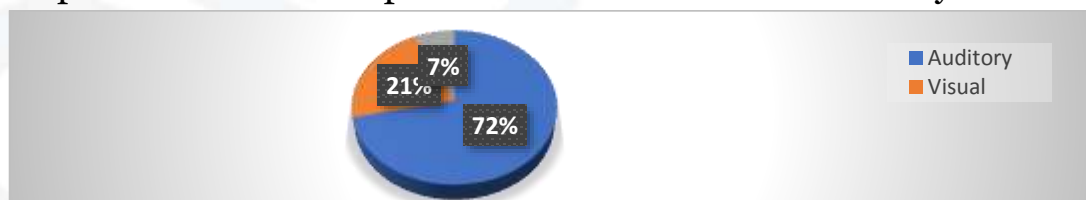

Figure 1

What stands out from figure 1 is that overwhelming majority of my students have auditory language style which is equal 72 %. With respect to the visual learners, it

makes up of just over one out of fifth. If we look at the kinesthetic learning style it comes with the least percentage which holds only 7 percent.

Looking at the details, for question one which asks students to show their preferences in terms of book, 6 out of 14 students chose books with pictures, another 3 students opted for books with activities and the rest 5 students marked that they love books with lots of words which means they showed high tendency towards visual style compared to auditory and kinesthetic.

As for the second question, overwhelming majority of students claim that they first imagine the cat in their mind (64%), only 21 percent of students mentioned that they say the word cat out loud, while just under 15 % of students chose thinking about being with a cat only. From this, we can conclude that students for the second question, in my group hold visual style more compared to the two types of style. Third question was asked to know how students learn best something new or when they come across something they do not know. Responses revealed that all students possess almost the same amount of learning styles, with a little bit difference. Well over one third students claim that they can learn best by hearing, another 35 % students' response tells that they learn best by seeing, and only well under one third of them mentioned that they prefer to do it in a kinesthetic way.

Responses for question four were surprisingly interesting. when students were asked what they could remember best during English class, 12 of them responded that they could remember the movement of the teacher and what they did together, only 1 student answered that he could remember the faces, and the other opted for "B" choice which is about the music they listened. As we can see, for question 4, kinesthetic style was the choice for almost all students having the greatest percentage. However, visual and auditory styles show the least portion. With respect to Q5 which aimed to identify students preferences towards the classes, half of the group chose gym classes, well over one third of students preferred music class and the rest 2 of them mentioned that they like art class. Even though, this question may not directly connected from language learning perspective, it , to some extend, demonstrates their overall learning styles and other variables. The purpose of the question which comes under 6 is to check if students imagine, sing or dance when they hear a song on the radio. According to the results, more than half of the students (57%) chose auditory way(in which they sing together with a singer), just under one third of them responded that they would imagine , conversely, only 14 % of students informed that they would start dancing and tapping their feet straightaway. What stands out from this data is that the majority of students demonstrate auditory style with well over half portion, while visual comes in the second place and kinesthetic the third.

In an attempt to find out students preference towards their favorite activity , question 7 was given. It is interesting to note that no visual style was found for this question. However, 64 % students opted for auditory learning style, whilst just under one third depicted kinesthetic style. It obviously demonstrates that auditory learning style is still popular among students. Lastly, when students were asked what they could remember best when they met a new person, 7 of them answered by telling they could recall people's faces which indicates visual style, while five students responded by the fact that they could recall better their names by hearing; however, one students left it blank and one student's answer was inconclusive as she chose 2 different options. The first observation revealed the fact that auditory learning style is more popular learning style in my group.

The second observation revealed that among three different learning styles, visual learners did relatively better on vocabulary test as opposed to auditory and kinesthetic learners.

AUDITORY

12%
50%
38%

A
B
C

VISUAL

C A
B
33%

A B C
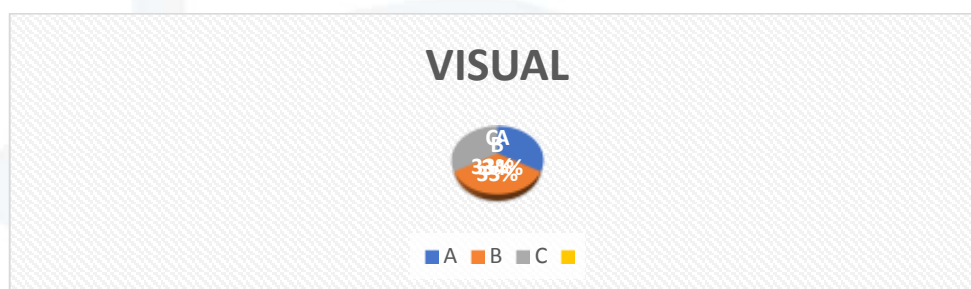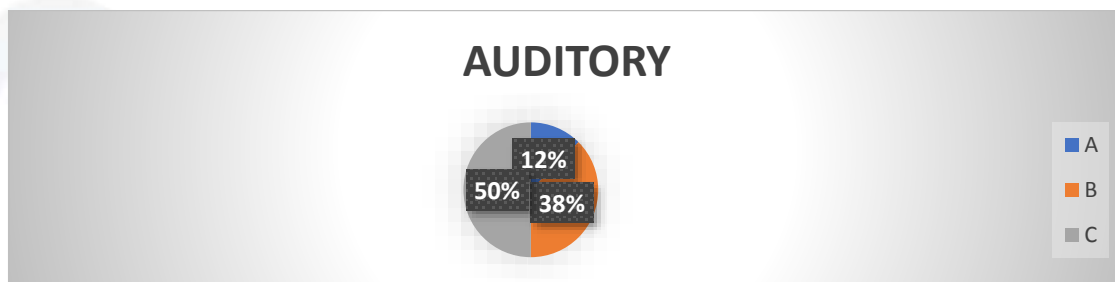
Conclusion

In the light of what has been discussed so far, it can be summarized that this case study dealt with 2 major issues. Firstly, in this case study I tried prove which learning style is more ubiquitous than others, secondly, I also strived to find out which learning style yields better results. Having look at both sides, one can infer that among three types of learning styles, in my group's case, auditory learners are more dominant, followed by visual learners, conversely, kinesthetic style is the least popular. When it comes to the which group learners did best, it should be highlighted that rather than auditory learning style learners, which I had expected better performance, visual

learners outperformed both types of learning style learners. As for the kinesthetic learners, the result was not as good as than that of visual and auditory learners. There might be, however, particular limitations of this outcome. Firstly, whether students were honest or not is under the question. Secondly, As I teacher, I might not have been able to use different methods effectively. Thirdly, lack of multimedia resources might have an impact.

Personally, I tend to hold the view that all learning styles play a crucial role in learning a target language due to the fact that it is what makes students be better learners than others. Obviously, learning styles make way for effective academic performance if used sensibly. Having done this case study, one suggestion from my part would be to group students both according to their level of L2 and learning styles. The reason for this could be such teaching process would make lessons be more interesting as they have almost the same learning styles in common. Moreover, professors could increase the possibility of effective academic performance much faster. Last but not least, having students with similar learning styles would economize the time spent on material development.

In the future, I want to conduct research into whether educating language learners according to their learning styles works best or not compared to mixed learning style groups.

It is needless to say that collecting relevant sources for this heated topic requires reviewing previous work in detail in this filed.

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