

INVESTIGATION INTO LEARNING STYLE PREFERENCES OF UZBEK UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the characteristics of the language learning styles of Uzbek University students. A quantitative investigation was conducted for this study. Due to the Covid-19 outbreak, the data for the research was collected electronically from 226 students (66 males and 160 females) of the Department of English at Namangan State University, Uzbekistan, 2020. Reid's Perceptual Learning Style Preferences Questionnaire had been adopted for the research instrument. The researcher designed an online questionnaire on the Google Drive platform. Basically, the results were analyzed in the SPSS program.

Keywords: Learning styles, visual, auditory, kinesthetic, tactile, independent, dependent, perceptual learning style preference

Introduction

Pedagogy is described as the science of teaching that studies how knowledge and skills are communicated in an educational environment. The instructor must consider what it means to study various types of materials for various circumstances, as well as how determine the most essential materials in various contexts. Different types of strategies must be implemented by educators in order to determine students' learning styles and assess their knowledge.

Educators ought to apply innovative approaches and strategies; and they should explain the content clearly; overcome misconceptions; implement various methods for their students in order to promote communicative teaching and learning in EFL classrooms. They have to acknowledge lots of different ways of teaching methods in the classroom for the individuals.

It is said that each person is different in his or her human characteristics such as self-studying, motivation, memorizing, decision-making, and language learning habits, styles, preferences, and interests. If EFL teachers consider such differences and peculiarities of the students in the language classroom, this might utilize the learning environment to be more efficient and pleasant for the learners. There have been plenty of educational research revealing significant differences in how learners comprehend and learn new materials in second language acquisition. It is understood that learning is done not only in groups but also by working individually. Each individual learns according to their own learning style. Thus, individual differences make the learning process more facilitating and rewarding. Identifying the strengths of different learners and investigating their weaknesses further drives educators to develop and promote pedagogy that values effective teaching and learning.

Considering the further improvements in the Uzbek university context the researcher set up the following purposes for the current study:

- a) to investigate Uzbek university students' learning styles preferences;

b) to identify the differences between Uzbek University male and female students learning styles preferences;

Methodology

Participants

To begin with, it is worth saying that it was hard to find the respondents for the study during the Covid-19 pandemic. At the beginning of the study, it was planned to conduct the survey by quantitative and qualitative methods. Due to pandemic restrictions and regulations, it was not possible to collect the data by observing the learners in a real EFL context. Finally, the researcher decided to distribute the online questionnaire to the participants. Considering the participants, the researcher chose Namangan State University (NSU) in Uzbekistan as a subject area. This institution is one of the largest higher education in Namangan province, in Uzbekistan. The survey was conducted with 226 undergraduate students of this university.

Research Instrument

Questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of 2 parts: the first part contains demographic data questions which ask the learners' age, gender, year of study, language certificates, and educational backgrounds. The latter is used to identify students' language learning style preferences in EFL contexts. It was adopted from “A Study of Language Learning Style and Teaching Style Preferences of Hong Kong Community College Students and Teachers in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) Contexts” by Wai Lam Heidi Wong. His English Language Learning Style Preference Questionnaire had been modified from Reid's (1987) perceptual learning style preferences questionnaire (PLSPQ).

Procedure

The questionnaire was mainly developed to investigate foreign language learners' perceptual learning style preferences. The PLSPQ originally used a five-point scale: from 1 (“Strongly agree”) to 5 (“Strongly disagree”), with 5 statements on each type of learning style. Wai Lam deleted a total of six out of thirty statements from the PLSPQ. In our study, we modified the Wai Lam questionnaire and for the study, we sorted out the statements by domains. Besides investigating the perceptual language learning style preferences of language learners, Wai Lam examined students' preferences for independent, dependent, analytic, and teacher-modeling learning styles, which were commonly identified learning and teaching styles in the literature. Those questionnaire statements were also included in the second part of the questionnaire by domains in the current study.

Data Analysis

After the data was collected, the researcher analyzed them using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Firstly, the data was coded and categorized to input SPSS software. Next, descriptive statistics were used to find the answer to research questions 1 and 2. The data was analyzed in descriptive statistics according to individual items and by category. The Mean, Standard deviation, Minimum, and Maximum of each item were examined to describe the data. Lastly, Independent T-test was utilized to get a full analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In order to determine whether there are any differences among the ten domains of learning style preferences used by learners Repeated Measures ANOVA was implemented for the study. The results are indicated in Table 1.

Table 1
Learning Style Preferences

	Type	N	M	SD	F	P	Note
Learner	Visual ^a	226	3.52	0.757	8,731**	0.000	a=f<g<j<i= b<e=h<c
	Auditory ^b	226	3.25	0.851			
	Kinesthetic	226	3.48	0.861			
	Tactile ^d	226	3.68	0.843			
	Individual ^e	226	3.28	0.779			
	Group ^f	226	3.53	0.871			
	Independent	226	3.57	0.841			
	Dependent	226	3.28	0.807			
	Teacher Modeling ⁱ	226	3.65	0.839			
	Analytic ^j	226	3.64	0.835			

***p<001

The results revealed that there are statistically significant differences among the ten domains employed by learners which means we can reject the null hypothesis (F=8,731, p=0.000). To be more precise means and standard deviations illustrate the most and the least preferred learning style of the students. Table 1 above clearly demonstrates that the majority of the students are tactile learners which has the greatest mean value of 3.68 and a standard deviation of 0.843. In other words, most students highly rely on physical touch to comprehend and grasp the concept best. The second most preferred learning styles were Teacher Modeling and Analytic, both with the same mean value of 3.65, 3.64. However, the standard deviation for Teacher Modeling was 0.839, while Analytics learning style showed a standard deviation of 0.835. This indicates that a fairly large number of students prefer to receive clear directions and thorough explanations of the subject being learned. Moreover, they learn a new concept by utilizing their cognitive skills, that is, dwelling on past observations, evaluating details and integrating experiences into what they are already familiar with. Furthermore, Independent (M=3.57), Group (3.53), and Visual (3.52) learning style preferences were categorized with less frequency.

Finally, Auditory, Independent, Dependent, and Kinesthetic were the minor learning style preferences with mean values of 3.25, 3.28, 3.28, and 3.48 respectively.

Analysis of Learning Style Preference According to Gender

Table 2
Results According to Gender

Gender	V	A	K	T	I	G	I	D	TM	A
M	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66
	3.65	3.3	3.49	3.7	3.3	3.7	3.0	3.3	3.61	3.6
	.676	.79	.914	.83	.86	.94	.8	.88	.858	.89
F	160	160	160	160	160	160	160	160	160	160
	3.48	3.2	3.49	3.6	3.2	3.4	3.0	3.2	3.67	3.6
	.786	.87	.842	.84	.74	.83	.8	.77	.833	.81
To	226	226	226	226	226	226	226	226	226	226
	3.53	3.2	3.49	3.6	3.2	3.5	3.0	3.2	3.65	3.6
	.758	.85	.861	.84	.78	.87	.8	.80	.839	.83

Note. V: Visual; A: Auditory; K: Kinesthetic; T: Tactile; I: Individual; G: Group; I: Independent; D: Dependent; TM: Teacher Modeling; A: Analytic

To answer the second objective of the research: to find out whether there are significant differences between male and female learners regarding learning styles, descriptive statistics were utilized. Table 2 demonstrates the results of means and standard deviations of learning styles according to gender among students. There was an overrepresentation of females as they accounted for 160 of the participants while there were 60 male respondents. As is observed in the table, mean scores for males were higher in most learning styles than for females. Specifically, male participants showed higher mean values for Visual ($M=3.65$), Auditory ($M=3.37$), Tactile ($M=3.49$), Individual ($M=3.34$), Independent ($M=3.63$), Dependent ($M=3.30$) and Group ($M=3.70$) learning styles. In contrast, Teacher Modelling ($M=3.67$), and Analytic ($M=3.66$) learning styles prevail over other learning styles in terms of female students. Interestingly, both males and females expressed an equal degree of interest in the Kinesthetic learning style ($M=3.49$). The results suggest that only the kinesthetic learning style is equally preferred by all males and females while other learning styles are more or less favored among the two genders.

Table 3

T-test According to Gender Learners

Learning Styles	Gender	N	M	SD	T	P
Visual	Male	66	3.65	.676	1.520	.130
	Female	160	3.48	.786		
Auditory	Male	66	3.37	.798	1.364	.174
	Female	160	3.20	.870		
Kinestheti	Male	66	3.49	.914	.021	.983
	Female	160	3.49	.842		
Tactile	Male	66	3.70	.838	.102	.919
	Female	160	3.68	.848		
Individual	Male	66	3.34	.866	.632	.528
	Female	160	3.27	.743		
Group	Male	66	3.70	.942	1.859	.064
	Female	160	3.47	.834		
Independe	Male	66	3.63	.835	.613	.540
	Female	160	3.55	.846		
Dependen	Male	66	3.30	.889	.184	.854
	Female	160	3.28	.774		
Teacher Modeling	Male	66	3.61	.858	-.504	.614
	Female	160	3.67	.833		
Analytic	Male	66	3.61	.897	-.358	.721
	Female	160	3.66	.811		

To provide further additional insights into the impact of gender on the students’ favored learning style and differences in the mean values, an independent T-test was conducted. Prior to the analysis, a hypothesis was produced to suggest that there were no significant differences in the learning styles of students according to gender. If the p-value for Leven’s test is greater than 0.05, significant differences in the means are not assumed. Thus, as reported by T-test results in Table 10, there was not a statistically significant difference between males and females in all ten types of learning styles. Revealing this indicates that both male and female students have similar learning styles. Therefore, it can be suggested that the instructor does not need to consider a particular learning style regarding gender.

Conclusion

As mentioned earlier, two questions were suggested to examine the Uzbek university students’ learning style preferences. The first question was to identify the learning styles of Uzbek University students. The most preferred learning style was determined by applying descriptive statistics. The results indicated that the Tactile learning style was regarded as the most dominant learning style by Uzbek university students. The subsequent most favored learning styles were Teacher Modeling and Analytics. In contrast, the students responded less favorably to Auditory, Dependent, and Individual learning styles.

The results are in line with a handful of previous studies. Particularly, Reid (1987) concluded that ESL learners from Eastern countries such as China and Korea were greatly tactile and analytic in their learning styles.

The second objective of the study was to analyze gender differences in the learning styles of Uzbek students. The data analysis results indicated that there was not a significant difference between the Uzbek male and female students concerning all ten types of learning styles. This suggests that the learning style preferences of Uzbek university students are not sensitive to the gender gap. That is to say, gender cannot be a differentiating factor in learning styles among Uzbek students and they are able to acquire essential knowledge regardless of their gender. These results align with existent literature (e.g., Aqel and Mahmoud, 2016; 60 Rabba, 2011; Shuib and Azizan, 2015) that did not support a significant role of gender in learning styles. An explanation for this finding may be attributed in part to the evolving learning conditions impacted by advances in technology which require students to adjust themselves, without regard to their gender.

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