

## Identifying EFL Students Learning Styles in the Context of Afghanistan

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### ABSTRACT

*In recent years, great attention was paid to the factors of individual differences in EFL context, especially the learner learning styles. The main purpose of this study is to determine the learning styles of Parwan university EFL learners. A mixed method of research (quantitative and qualitative) was considered in order to collect and analyze the data. A total of 110 EFL Parwan university students (90 males) and (20 females) were participated in this study. The results of descriptive statistics indicated that the majority of the participant 81 % positively valued the visual learning styles. In addition, the findings showed that 53 % of the participants preferred auditory learning styles while 66 % of them determined as kinesthetic learners.*

### KEYWORDS

*learning styles; visual; auditory; kinesthetic English; language.*

### INTRODUCTION

There are various options available to help learners identify their styles, preferences, advantages and disadvantages and one of that most confusing problems in languages studying and teaching is variety of individual differences, and human learning seems to diverge in some possible ways. Students participate at EFL classes with various abilities in terms of the mode of studying. Such variation or mismatches between EFL learners' the mode of studying can lead to poor learning achievements and negative classroom attitudes (Khany, & Tarlani Aliabadi, 2016). Therefore, learning style are the preferred ways of learning and studying, including, using picture instead of text, working in groups as instead of individual tasks, or learning in a structured way rather than in an unstructured manner (Brown, 2014). To sum up this, Studying choices are a person's conceptual educational strategy. This has a tremendous influence on how each students and the instructor, particularly what teachers anticipate from them in the class (Pritchard, 2017).

In recent times, Individual learner variations have received a lot of attention. such as emotional intelligence, cognition, and metacognition in foreign language learning. One of the most important issues in the context of learning a foreign language is recognizing the learner's learning style. The mode of studying are often used to describe learners' normal, natural, and preferred ways to process, accept and retain new skills and information (Reid, 1995). Learners with different the mode of studying can react differently to of learning and teaching process, including methods of teaching in EFL classroom. There is no right or wrong answer as to which learning style is best for the learner. Therefore, the goal of this study is to fill this need by discovering and better understanding students' own the mode of study and adopting techniques that increase the speed and quality of learning in the EFL classroom.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Recognizing The mode of studying of EFL learners is the key to strengthening the language learning process and supporting language instruction in the classroom. Khany and Tarlani Aliabadi (2016) state that identifying a learner's the mode of studying could effect on their final achievement. Mismatches between students' the mode of studying and language instruction lead to poor quality of teaching and learning. Various research had been done in this area, but no study has been done in context of Afghanistan, especially in department of English at Parwan university. Therefore, in order to develop the language learning and teaching process, it is necessary to discover the mode of studying of ELF learners.

### **Significant of the Study**

Most language teachers have had a bad experience of devoting time, energy and effort on language learners without receiving pleasant feedback. All teachers somehow expect students to perform tasks, listen carefully to teachers, work alone or in teams, and so on. The only way to come across is to find the mode of studying of the student in the classroom. Therefore, the results of current study help English teachers recognize students' studying styles in the class. In addition, the findings of this study will help EFL learners recognize their the mode of studying to make learning English easier.

### **The purpose of the study**

Recognizing students' the mode of studying is an important factor for teachers to improve their teaching. Therefore, the main purpose of this study is to discover and identify The mode of studying of EFL students at Parwan University. In addition, this study aims to emphasize the English teacher's awareness of designing classroom activities and tasks based on learner preferences. Finally, EFL learners know their preferred learning style in the classroom.

### **Research Questions**

The current study intends to addresses the research questions are:

1. What are the most prominent the mode of studying of Parwan university EFL students?
2. To what extent their beliefs match to their practices?

### **Hypothesis**

1. There is not much difference between Parwan university EFL students' beliefs and practices towards their visual the mode of studying.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Numerous research has been done to find learners' the mode of studying in the context of EFL education in literature. Obviously, many who are involved in the teaching and learning process have stated that learning is always different from each other and is known as the "preferred learning style".

Since the literature provides many different definitions of ideas related to the mode of studying, (Pritchard, 2017) proposes the following definitions:

- a. A mode of learning, an individual's favorite or ideal way(s) of thinking, processing information, and demonstrating studying.
- b. A person's chosen method of learning skills and knowledge.
- c. An effective teaching - learning habits, techniques, or regular mental conduct, particularly purposeful school studying.

### Benefits of Recognizing in The mode of studying

According to Biggs (2001), identifying the mode of studying has the following benefits:

1. Learners integrate the learning process to learn easily and quickly and lead to success.
2. Help learners become effective problem solvers.
3. Learners can control learning anywhere.

### **Classification of The mode of studying:**

Many scholars have proposed different classifications of the mode of studying, but the most common are 'visual, auditory, and kinesthetic the mode of studying' (Roohani, Etesami, & Mirzaei, 2020).

- *Visual is* refer to persons who like to read and learn using visual signals such as images, photographs, videos, graphs, charts, and photos.
- *Auditory is* refer those who prefer to learn or gain information better from oral instructions via speeches, audio recording, conversations, lectures and other form of verbal communication.
- *Kinesthetic is* refer those who prefer to retain information by using hand and body (physically).

In addition to the aforesaid classifications, literature has other types of the mode of studying. Like, logical, musical, tactile, individual or solitary, group or social (Gardner, 2006). However, language learning can be influenced by many other factors, including emotions, motivations and incentives, intelligence, age, and curiosity. Thus, learning style is one of the factors that can influence the success of language learning. Chetty et al. (2019) conducted a survey of 5 instructors and 252 students at Malaysia University Pahang to examine the connection between student learning style and teacher learning style. The results of the study showed that the majority of students prefer a visual learning style. Thus, Nakatani (2010) states that by applying specific strategies to learn, students can improve their communicative language skills and evidence that they are independent learners.

Similarly, Gilakjani (2012) examined the perceptions of Iranian EFL college students to show whether their mode of studying was auditory, visual, or kinesthetic. The purpose of this study was to raise teacher awareness and understand the impact of the mode of studying on the teaching process. The results of the study showed that EFL University students prefer visual learning. In addition, Al Hebaishi (2012) conducted a survey of 88 participants in order to identify the mode of studying and learning strategies. The study's findings suggested that the majority of participants favoured the visual learning technique. Similarly, no significant relationship was found between learning style and academic achievement.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

A mixed method of research (quantitative and qualitative) was considered in order to collect and analyzed the data. A total of 110 EFL Parwan university students (90 males) and (20 females) were participated in this survey. The average ages of the participants were 20 to 35 with medium level of English proficiency.

### **Instruments**

Two instruments were applied for gathering the data of the current study. The questionnaire developed by Gilakjani (2012) consisting 12 items was used to collect the quantitative phase of the research while a semi-structured interview was used to collect the qualitative phase of the study. The questionnaire was a closed-ended item from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree", and the participants require to answer the statement on a five-point Likert scale.

To verify the validity of the questionnaire, it became a pilot and was confirmed by a number of experts at Parwan University before the questionnaire was implemented. The reliability of the questionnaire was calculated by SPSS23 using Cronbach's alpha factor and given as 0.77.

### Data Analysis

The quantitative phase of the data was analyzed through descriptive statistics by SPSS23 in order to find out the mean, SD, and percentages of each items. The qualitative phase of this study was analyzed through conducting a semi-structured interview with 6 participants.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of descriptive statistics were used in more details to answer the first research question (1RQ). The responses were rated from strongly disagree to strongly agree to find out the general perception of the participants in terms of (mean, SD, and percentages). The results of the semi-structured were used to answer the (2RQ) accordingly.

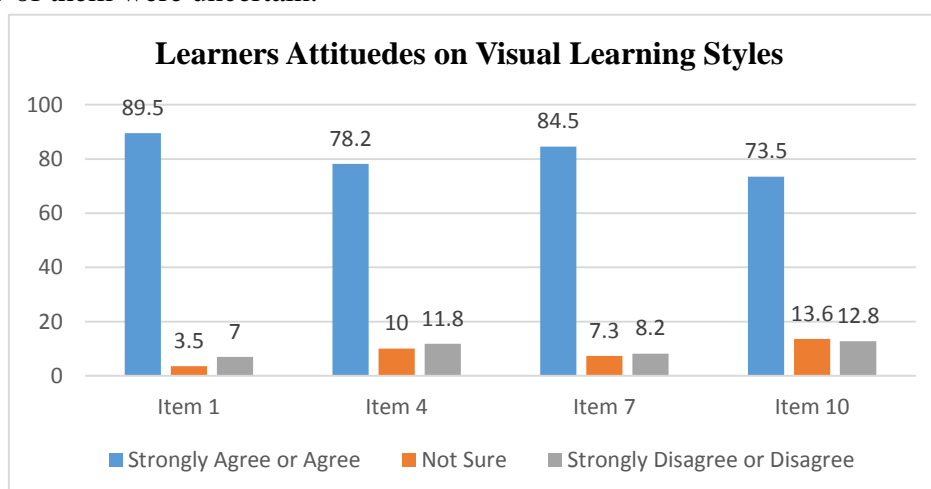
### Demographic Information

The results of descriptive statistics shown in chart 1 that almost 94.5% all of the participants were between 20-25 years old, while only 5.5% of them at age of 25-30.

**Table 1.** The Participants based on Age and Gender

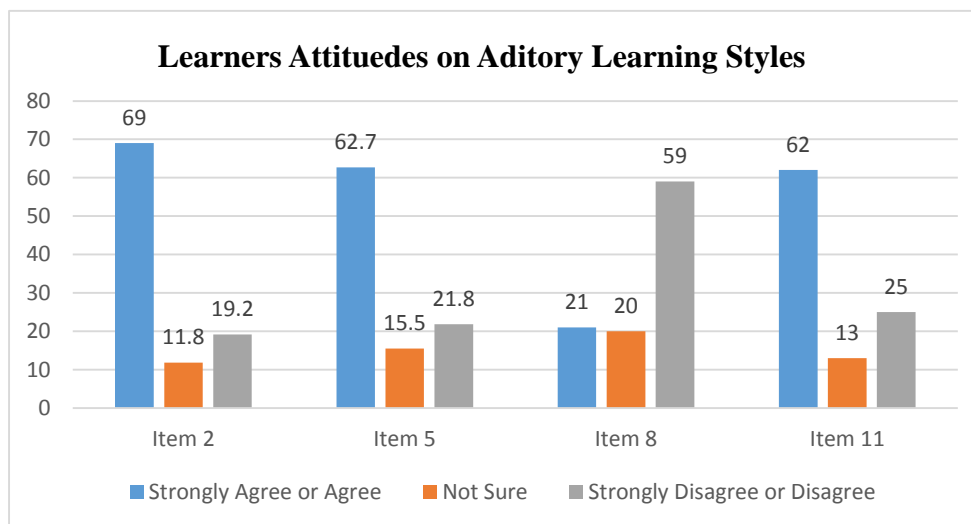
Participants Age and Gender			
Age	Gender	No.	Percentage
25-20	M	80	76%
	F	15	12%
25-30	M	10	8%
	F	5	4%
Total		100	100%

Four items in the questionnaire (1,4,7, and 10) were included to determine visual learning style of the learners. The results of descriptive statistics reported that the mean score (M= 4.13, SD=0.98), which present almost all of the participants positively valued visual the mode of studying. Chart 1, clearly indicates that over 81% of the participants preferred visual learning style. Only 10% of the learners showed disagreement with these four items and 9% of them were uncertain.



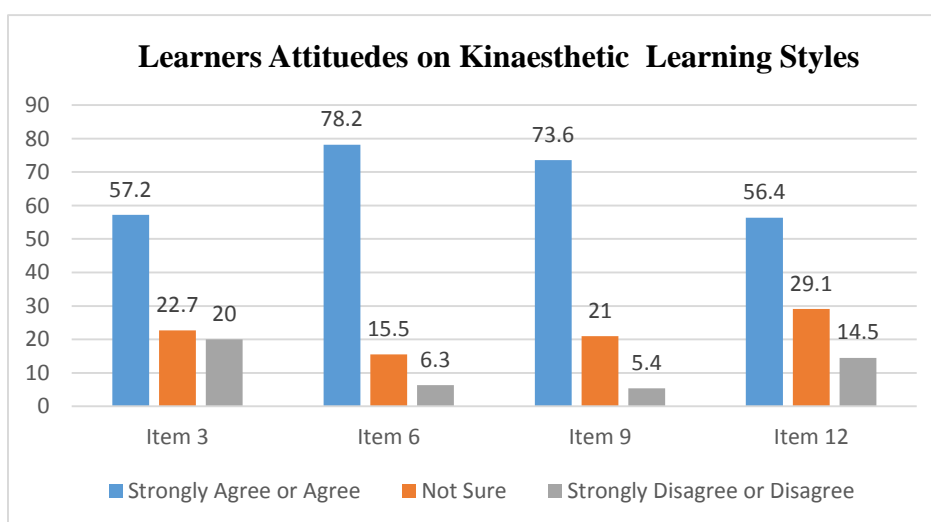
**Figure 1.** Learners Attitudes on Visual Learning Styles

Similarly, four items in the questionnaire (2,5,8, and 11) were considered to identify auditory the mode of studying of the English learners. The results of the descriptive statistics declared the mean score ( $M=3.32$ ,  $SD=1.17$ ) which express that 53% of the participants valued auditory the mode of studying while 32% negatively valued and 15% of the participants were not sure.



**Figure 2.** Learners Attitudes on Aditory Learning Styles

Eventually, four items in the questionnaire (3,6,9, and 12) were considered to examine English learners kinesthetic the mode of studying. The findings of descriptive statistics reported the mean score ( $M=3.75$ ,  $SD=0.97$ ) which illustrate the 66% of the participants positively valued kinesthetic the mode of studying. On the other hand, 22% of them were not sure while 11% expressed their negative attitudes towards kinesthetic the mode of studying.



**Figure 3.** Learners Attitudes on Kinesthetic Learning Styles

### **Qualitative data analysis**

The second research question (2RQ) was considered to find out how much the participants' beliefs and practices are in line. Three questions were asked from six participants in order to find out their the mode of studying. The first question was designed to elicit their

perceptions on visual the mode of studying. All of the participants somehow valued visual the mode of studying. They said that “learning through pictures, watching video, chart, reading text books... are the best way to learn a foreign language”. The results of descriptive statistics also indicated that 81% of the participants valued visual learning style. Therefore, the results of the qualitative and quantitative methods showed that the learner's beliefs and practices were on the same line. The second question was asked to find their perspective on auditory the mode of studying. The results of the second question showed that the majority of participants answered positively to their auditory learning style. Only two disagreed, but the other four agreed that they would like to learn English by listening. Finally, a third question was asked to examine the participants' beliefs about kinesthetic learning. The results of this question showed that three of the participants showed positive consent and the other three showed negative consent to learn the language through physical learning.

Apparently, a mixed method study was applied to discover the mode of studying of English learners in the context of EFL in Afghanistan. The results of the descriptive statistics of the first research question showed that 81% of participants preferred a visual learning style. Similarly, the findings of descriptive statistic on auditory presented that 53% positively valued auditory the mode of studying. In the same line, 66% of learners say they enjoy learning by completing tasks in the classroom. Therefore, the findings of this study are somewhat confirm the findings of Gilakjani (2012) and Al Hebaishi (2012). The results of their study revealed that the visual learning style was most preferred by the majority of participants. On the other hand, the findings of qualitative method through semi-structured interview indicated that almost all of the participants positively valued visual the mode of studying while the majority of them preferred auditory the mode of studying. Conversely, half of the participants' beliefs were consistent with their practice only in kinesthetic the mode of studying.

## **CONCLUSION**

Identifying the mode of studying is helpful and beneficial to all teachers and students, and leads to successful education, especially in foreign language teaching. The survey was followed by a mixed-procedure consisting of a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. A total of 110 EFL Parwan university students participated in this study. The quantitative data of the study was analyzed by SPSS23, and the quantitative phase was categorized, summarized and qualitatively analyzed. Thus, it can be concluded that the majority of the participants preferred a visual the mode of studying. Therefore, teaching materials, tasks and activities should be presented by reading, picture, videos and textbooks.

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