

## IS LEARNING STYLE A TOP PRIORITY IN LANGUAGE LEARNING IN INTERMEDIATE EFL LEARNERS?

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### ABSTRACT

Studying how EFL students with various learning styles approach oral production tasks is the aim of the research. According to Kolb's theory of experiential learning, the research examined students with various learning styles using a descriptive qualitative technique. Students were given self-assessment questionnaires to determine their preferred methods of learning. It was discovered via these interviews that students' abilities to execute well in a variety of oral production activities varied widely. The interview was taped and afterward transcribed verbatim from the audio. The transcribed data is then classified, including how students' learning styles and oral production tasks match and don't match, and how this affects their learning outcomes. Students who are taught according to their preferred learning style are more motivated and engaged, which leads to an improvement in their performance, according to the study's results. Research also shows that learning styles do not always have a large role in improving learning motivation and participation. Students prioritize learning needs above preferences at particular ability levels, according to the study, which has consequences for the stretched method.

**Keywords:** Learning Styles, Oral Production Task, Priority in Learning

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Politics in Nigeria students learning the English language in an EFL context, it is now necessary for them to take a more practical approach, particularly in the speaking subject, which demands them to develop their own words vocally in response to the information they are being given. Thus, it should come as no surprise that many language instructors encourage their students to imitate their native accents and pronunciation when speaking the language (Rahman, et al., 2019). Drama, debate, singing, discussion, and other oral activities are all frequent strategies for attaining this aim via active learning that is inspired by the imagination (Hamuddin, et al., 2020). As a consequence, these methods are often regarded as essential in the art of public speaking.

The speaking assignments provided to students by their teachers must also be closely monitored by the teachers. In large part, this is due to the fact that students learning English as a second or foreign language (ESL) are only exposed to English in the classroom due to a lack of exposure to the language in daily life. Additionally, while teaching English as a foreign language, it is vital to consider the students' point of view (Reiser et al., 2021; Al-Mahrooqi et al., 2015; Wan et al., 2011). This is the case because, in order to facilitate successful language learning and teaching, it is necessary to consider both learner skills and underlying assumptions. As a result, students should be given the opportunity to explain and assess their judgments while promoting this concept, especially when it comes to creating learning goals in general and comprehending learning methodologies in particular (Rahman, 2016). Because of this, instructors may be able to support students in the development of their metacognitive abilities.

Students' learning preferences may be classified in order to better suit their demands in the classroom. Solutions supplied by teachers may or may not be useful, depending on the circumstances (Anggawirya, et al., 2021). Another explanation for the inability to effectively communicate learning goals to pupils is because of this disparity. This indicates that, in order for learning to be successful, teachers and students must cooperate together (Paulsrud & Nilholm, 2020; Kopylova, 2019; Krajewska, 2019). Teachers should enable students to choose their own learning activities as part of their overall teaching plan.

People have been using learning style as a trustworthy approach to functioning for quite some time now, and it explains the fundamental reasons of learning behavior rather well. An educational strategy, as well as a characteristic, are used when educating students about cognition, context, and subject matter. The study of how individuals learn has seen an increase in popularity. A research conducted by Gappi (2013) evaluated how children like learning and how well they do academically in school, for example. It was the researchers' goal to determine which methods of teaching were favored by various age groups, genders, and academic programs, as well as if there was a relationship between these preferences and students' academic achievement. Also asserted is that students' ability to detect and respond appropriately to information in a learning environment is impacted by their learning style, which may be described as follows: (Azlinda, 2006).

Students' abilities to learn and adapt to their learning environment, according to this idea, are impacted by the unique learning styles that they possess (Azlinda, 2006). The ability for students to designate their preferred methods of learning makes it easier to arrange and plan language learning activities in an efficient manner. This allows pupils to "grow and exploit their intrinsic strengths and inclinations, since students' motivation will be maintained, and they will be able to proceed successfully through the language process" as a consequence of this (Azlinda, 2006).

Rather than concentrating on the association between learning styles and students' learning outcomes or performance, research on learning styles has generally focused on the relationship between learning styles and task performance (Fakomogbon & Bolaji, 2017; Haider et al., 2010). Many academics have also looked at methods to make learning techniques more practical, which includes using simulations. (Sadeghi, et al., 2012; Rahman & Weda, 2019) illustrate how core personality characteristics determine decisions and

become the main influencer in the field of foreign language teaching. In an early study by Armstrong and McDaniel, it was discovered that the kind of learning style had an influence on the development of metacognition and learner problem-solving abilities (1986).

There have been a number of experiments and exploratory inquiries on learning styles and non-verbal task performance undertaken in the past. Students' performance in oral production activities has gotten less scrutiny because of this inclination, which has received little attention. Thus, it appears as though the learning styles paradigm assumes that students prefer visual, kinaesthetic, or auditory objects to be used to explain concepts to them; in the same way, it appears as though students prefer visual, kinaesthetic, or auditory objects to be used to explain concepts to them. As the researcher saw when teaching, students enrolled in speaking courses are compelled to engage in oral output. However, students' opinions on the instructor's selection of oral production tasks are highly polarized, regardless of how they are expressed.

As a result, an investigation is required to evaluate whether the teacher's use of oral exercises influences students' decisions. When compared to students who are taught in a more conventional way, students who are taught according to their learning styles do much better in public speaking situations.

## **2.0 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The aims of this research are 1) to extend the previous studies' focus, and direction to how match and mismatch of oral production tasks affect learning, and 2) to investigate how different types of learning styles perceive distinct oral production tasks.

## **3.0 METHODS**

To better understand how students' learning styles are affected by oral production tasks, the present research examines students' perceptions of the activity and how it impacts them. As a result of the necessity to focus on a particular research topic, this study adopts a descriptive qualitative research design. This is required in order to offer a complete account of specific events that people or groups of individuals have gone through. The research employs an in-depth interview with students in order to learn more about how they comprehended and were taught about a certain topic. Students' perceptions, motivation, metacognition, and sense of agency are all impacted by how oral production tasks are allocated to different learning styles, therefore using reflective fieldnotes is a smart move for the researcher. Prior to transcribing and approving transcripts of the interview, audio recordings of research participants were used to preserve their comments. The Visual, Audio, Kinesthetics (VAK) evaluation questionnaire was utilized in this study because it is vital to classify students based on their learning styles. Reading and writing notes, describing what is occurring in the environment, and classifying research results are all examples of iterative or repetitive actions that may be used to continue the analysis.

## **4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

VAK To date, the learning style in oral production tasks has been mostly overlooked. Learning takes on a new light when pupils are forced to put their newly acquired skills to the

test. Students' learning styles are examined in this study to see whether they have an influence on oral output tasks in the classroom. Students may profit or suffer from a poor match between their writing style and their assignments. What may happen as a consequence of the mismatch situation occurring? and 3) What new information may be gleaned from this research.

## 4.1 The Advantages and Disadvantages of Matched Preferences

According to the traditional understanding of learning styles, kids will learn more efficiently when exposed to tactics that are suited for their range of learning. This study does not refute this narrative; rather, it expands on it. The degree to which a student achieves in a class is determined by a range of factors, including intrinsic talent and the degree to which learners' learning styles and instructors' teaching styles are compatible. Additionally, some research indicates that congruence (alignment) between teaching and learning styles has a positive effect on students' achievement and satisfaction with their educational experience. At some level, all academic institutions have a degree of matching and mismatching between teaching and learning styles. The word "mismatch" refers to a scenario in which students' preferred methods of information processing do not correlate to professors' preferred teaching strategies. According to the authors, this results in poor performance on the side of the children, as they get bored and demotivated.

While it is desirable to match learning styles, it does not result in an improvement in learning performance. As such, it has no adverse effect on performance and does not operate as a restriction. While students see it as an important characteristic, this does not make it the most influential component.

Adewale et al. (2018) propose that teachers' tactics should be tailored to their students' needs. The present study validated a previous study's result that students, regardless of their preferences, prioritize their regions for improvement above their domain of learning convenience. Additionally, it is observed that pupils are advancing outside their style range, which is no longer suited for their level of ability. This supports Valentine's (1975) argument that an experienced learner needs a more diverse repertoire of knowledge exercises than a beginner.

## 4.2 Case of Mismatch in the Investigated Informants

Traditionally, when there is a misalignment between teaching and learning styles, it is believed that learners would suffer from learning failure and discontent, which will have negative effects on both learners and instructors. Obviously, one conclusion that may be reached is that learners should be held more responsible for their own education. Individuals should make every effort to meet their own learning requirements and preferences, both within and outside the classroom, since they are the ones who are most knowledgeable about their own learning requirements and preferences.

We urge that EFL teachers (1) seek to identify their own teaching style, (2) identify the learning styles of their students, and (3) make every effort to accommodate those learning styles to the greatest extent feasible. Among the strategies for attaining (3) is to match the teaching style with the learning style of the pupils. It may be desirable, given the diversity of

learning types within a class, to strive for a balanced teaching style that does not unduly favor anyone learning type – or rather, that seeks to accommodate a number of distinct learning styles – rather than an unbalanced teaching approach. On the other hand, pedagogical modifications should be guided by instructors' perceptions of what makes effective classroom practice. Teachers may provide students with new information and resources in a variety of methods, and they can involve them in a variety of activities to keep them interested in learning.

Neither the present study nor the previous one addresses Prasetyo's (2021) claim that classifying students has no effect on their academic achievement. Indeed, a number of studies have shown that pupils have difficulty learning. Additionally, when the teacher supports students who are presented with mismatches, such as by allowing them the opportunity to deliver a speech, the situation becomes less difficult. While Tam (2021) and Munir et al. (2017) agree with this, Marzulina (2019) revealed that there is no link between matching style and enhanced learning results for students in the classroom.

While correlation is not the primary focus of this study, the findings of the analysis show that it has some implications in that area. When pupils are mismatched, they begin to debate over why it is important to study despite the fact that it is unpleasant. Learners see mismatch as a source of difficulty, but also as a chance for development. This, on the other hand, is not convincing evidence that the correlational issue has been shown.

### **4.3 Implications for Theoretical and Practical Considerations**

The key deciding element is not the learner's learning style. While some students are aware of the misalignment, others are intrigued by their non-style choices which increase their motivation to continue their studies. Alternatively, some show that a certain learning style is unimportant at a specific time in their schooling. To suggest that Jaya's (2019) proposal to make students aware of their chosen learning style in order to maximize their potential is flawed is an understatement. But according to the findings of the present study, this is true, but only at a certain stage of learning and requires additional investigation and validation.

According to Hasib et al., (2021), students' cultural backgrounds may have an impact on their ability to study. Consequently, by providing instructors with the necessary knowledge about students' culture and how it influences their preferred learning styles, teachers and other instructors, such as college professors, may be able to incorporate more preferred learning style approaches into their instructional delivery. While a variety of approaches should be encouraged, it is more important to include students' preferred methods in order to help in their retention and achievement. The mismatch between the majority of students' learning styles and the instructional task choices made by their teachers may cause students to get bored and inattentive, to do badly on examinations, and feel disheartened about their courses, the curriculum, and even their own abilities. This subject of encouragement has been brought to the forefront of the current research.

The need of stretching one's learning style is also a significant consideration. Despite the fact that learning style has traditionally been regarded as a relatively stable individual characteristic, numerous authors have emphasized the importance of learners maintaining stylistic flexibility in order to adapt to the conditions of the particular learning environment

and derive maximum benefit from it through a process known as style stretching (Griffiths & nceçay, 2016). Style stretching is a process in which learners adapt their learning style to the conditions of the particular learning environment and derive maximum benefit from it.

According to the results of this study, the most successful students in terms of learning performance were those who were diverse in their style choices and open to a range of style options in their learning.

It seems from the results of this study that there is a noticeable relationship between learning style and successful learning; nevertheless, care should be used when extrapolating the findings of this study to other learners and situations. Further research indicates that people who want more meaningful exercise are often beyond their learning comfort zone, where they see it as a challenge to their learning.

There are two basic assumptions concerning learning styles in EFL/ESL classrooms proposed by Reid (1995), which are as follows: As stated in the first premise, every student has his or her own distinct learning style, in addition to his or her own set of weaknesses and strengths. A mismatch between learners' learning styles and instructors' teaching styles, according to the second hypothesis, results in failure, discontent, or demotivation during the course of learning or teaching. In light of the vast research that has been undertaken on this subject matter, the second hypothesis has garnered a large amount of support from the scientific community (Hamuddin, et al., 2020). Several authors have expressed the idea that mismatches between teaching techniques and learning styles may occur often and that this can have negative effects on learning, attitudes toward the class, and attitudes against the English language in general. Researchers have discovered that when learners of all levels are taught using strategies that are tailored to their learning characteristics, they become more motivated and have a better likelihood of achieving higher academic outcomes. Aside from this, Reid points out that when students' learning styles and teaching styles are compatible, it provides an atmosphere in which all students have equal opportunities to achieve in the classroom, while simultaneously developing students' self-awareness. According to the findings of the current study, in order to achieve a match between teaching styles and learning styles, instructors must balance their instructional techniques by accommodating all learner types and, more importantly, by identifying students' needs and stretching their learning styles, respectively.

## 5.0 CONCLUSIONS

Numerous inferences are drawn from the study's findings and discussion. To begin, pupils' learning styles are already starched at a particular point. As seen by the results of the learning style questionnaire, no student scores in every type. Additionally, as described and researched in earlier studies, it is critical to adopt a strategy while stretching styles. Second, the current research demonstrates that students have evolved to the point where their success in learning is no longer determined by their preferences but rather by their desire for progress. This also leads to the observation that the teaching function is critical at that period. Encouraging pupils will be a separate critical problem, as it will affect their drive to study. Additionally, match and mismatch are not good categories for discussing learning styles since, at this level, kids have a variety of goals that outweigh adapting their learning styles. This implies that

although accommodating a single style is unlikely to be a problem, it is critical to satisfying students' demands in order for their style range to grow.

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