Learning and Teaching Styles in the Focus: The Case of Iranian EFL Learners and Teachers

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Abstract

Underlying any learning and teaching process is a set of preferred Learning Styles (LSs) and Teaching Styles (TSs) which epitomize the overall educational policy and identification of which is sine qua non for any reform of the educational system. This ex-post-facto study scrutinized preference of Iranian EFL teachers' for Expert, Formal Authority, Personal Model, Facilitator, and Delegator TSs and their students' tendencies towards Visual, Auditory, and Kinaesthetic student LSs. We collected the research data based on Grasha's (1996) Teaching Style Questionnaire administered to 30 Iranian EFL teachers and the Barsch Learning Style Questionnaire (1991) administered to 300 Iranian EFL learners. Descriptive statistics of the research data revealed that majority of Iranian EFL learners opt for the visual learning style and teachers highly favour facilitating foreign language learning. However, Visual and Delegate Learning and Teaching Styles reflected the lowest frequencies. The findings underscore the need to raise teachers' awareness of LSs so that they can modify their teaching according to their students' preferences.

Keywords: learner EFL, English Learners, English Teachers, Learning Styles, Teaching Styles

Introduction

One area where teachers and teacher educators have reached consensus is the fact that teaching is subordinate to learning (Gattegno, 1970). Individual differences (IDs) among language learners in terms of their goals and objectives, on the one hand, and locally imposed restrictions of different kinds, on the other, underscore the need to revisit teaching methodologies in line with IDs and local pedagogies (Brown, 2001). Concerns about finding out the characteristics of individual learners that may help educators to design learning opportunities to maximize the achievement of the learners have a long history (Dunn, Honigsfeld, & Doolan, 2009). Learning styles (LSs) are among the recent most favoured individual differences based on which learners might be discriminated and categorized. 'LSs' as a concept is highlysupportedacross educational fields and in many otherdomains of human activity (Cassidy, 2004). Yet, it is quite natural for LSs to be changed into TSs when individual learners with a particular type or types of LSs become teachers and extend their learning preference to the sphere of classroom while teaching their own learners (Borg, 2011).

Scholars have suggested a number of definitions of LSs. Dunn and Grigss (1988) suggested that these set of characteristics are biological and developmental in nature and can make the same teaching method delightful for some and disgusting for others. To Reid (1987), styles represent dissimilarities among learners in using one or more senses to understand, organize and retain experience. In addition, from this perspective, they are patterns that give a way to learning behaviour (Cornett, 1983).Oxford, Ehrman, and Lavine (1991) defined LSs as general approaches used by students in order to learn a new subject or to manage a new problem. To Dunn and Grigss (1988), LSs are defined with regard to learners' preferences for varying teaching activities as the biologically and developmentally sets of characteristics that make the same teaching method delightful for some and disgusting for others. Reid (1987), however, links LSs to the learners' propensities to perceive and process learning experiences. Cornett (1983) defined these relatively permanent predispositions as patterns that give a way to learning behaviour.

A meta-analysis by Hattie (2009) revealed that individualizing instruction towards the specific needs and preferred LSs of the individuals is an inefficient

way in teaching process. He stated that while the term 'Learning Style' has fascination, the examination of the field displays that it is characterized by significant conceptual uncertainty. These classifications are tangible and apparently perceivable by simply observing children. Scrutiny can show that LSs are frequently related to other ways of categorizing human mental function such as personality typologies and cognitive styles (Hattie, 2009).

Cornett (1983) and Keefe (1987) categorized LSs into three major types including cognitive, affective, and physiological. Reynolds (1991) presented a conceptual model for categorizing LSs characteristics. His model includes physical environment needs, social environment preferences, time of day, motivation and values, cognitive styles and perceptual preferences.

In his LSs Model, Gregorc's (1979, 1997) described LSs as "distinctive and observable behaviours that come up with clues about the mediation abilities of individuals and how their minds link to the world and consequently, how they learn" (1979, p.19). Gregorc (1997) has recognized four types of learners according to their LSs. Concrete-Sequential Learners prefer direct, hands-on experience, want to order and a logical chain to the tasks, and go behind instructions well. Abstract-Sequential Learners like working with ideas and symbols. They are coherent and sequential in thinking, and like to focus on the task without interruption. Abstract-Random Learners concentrate on the people and the surrounding, opt for discussions and conversations that have extensive scope and need time to think about experiences. The Concrete-random Learners are experimental and risk-takers like to investigate unstructured problems and use trial and error to solve them.

Kolb's (1984) Experiential learning model defines learning as "the process whereby knowledge is generated through the conversion of experience" (p.26). LSs, hence, might be construed as the "generalized differences in learning adaptations based on the extent to which people highlight the four modes of the learning process" (p.76). According to Kolb (1984), individual LSs develop from a combination of two adjacent mode preferences in the experiential learning cycle. He introduced four styles of learning. Divergent Learning Style (DLS) is distinguished as the one in which the learner is concerned with divergent ideas and is judged an imaginative learner. Learners with DLS have a strong imaginative ability and see things from different viewpoints. They are innovative and work well with people. Assimilator Learning Style (ALS)

learners are less centredwith people and more interested in abstract ideas. Assimilators can create theoretical models and favour inductive reasoning. Convergent Learning Style (CLS) is the one in which the learner better likes to deal with technical tasks instead of social issues. Convergent learners have a strong practical positioning. Unlike assimilators are generally deductive in their thinking and tend to be unemotional. Accommodator style learners enjoy carrying out plans, doing things, taking risk, and solving problems intuitively (Richards& Rodgers, 2001).

Fleming (2001) defined learning style as "an individual's attributes and preferred ways of obtaining, systemizing, and reflecting on information and suggested Visual-Aural-Read/Write-Kinesthetic (VARK) Model which is sub-class of instructional preference because it deals with perceptual modes. According to VARK Model, Visual learners favour maps, charts, graphs, diagrams, highlighters, different colours, pictures, word pictures, and different spatial arrangements. Aural learners like to describe new ideas to others, talk over topics with other learners and their teachers, use a tape recorder, take part in lectures, and discussion groups. Read/Write learners prefer lists, essays, reports, textbooks, definitions, printed handouts, readings, web pages, and taking notes. Kinesthetic learners like field trips, trial and error, doing things to understand them, laboratories, recipes, and solutions to problems, hands-on approaches, using their senses, collections, and samples.

Dunn and Griggs (1989) described LSs as "the way in which individuals begin to concentrate on, handle, internalize, and maintain new and difficult information" (p.353) and introduced the Revised Approaches to Studying Inventory (RASI) Model. This model interprets LSs as "the combination of characteristic, cognitive, affective, and psychological factors that works as a measure of how a person interacts with and react to the learning surrounding" (p.56). Duff (2004) detailed students with a preference for a deep approach to studying as individuals who look for meaning in what they are learning and enjoy learning activities, make connections between what they are learning and their previous learning, use logic, reasoning, and evidence well. Students with a surface approach to studying use essentially memorization to learn, make less association to the previous learning, and have difficulty studying. Students who favour strategic method want to organize their studying routines, manage their

time, and learn what is expected to achieve the highest grade possible. Hawk and Shah (2007) proposed that LSs determine the choice of learning activities and approaches and this intensifies the effectiveness and quality of learning for students.

The individual's LSs are the way in which an individual characteristically acquires, retains, and retrieves information. Students learn in many different ways. Some of the learners may prefer to learn by seeing and hearing; some are willing to reflect and act; some would rather analytical thinking or memorizing and conceptualizing. Teaching methods also vary. Some educators would rather lecture, others demonstrate or discuss; some focus on rules,etc.There are different frameworks for classifying TSs. Daniel Pratt (2002) describes five different approaches towards learners and content. Grasha and Grasha (1996) divided TSs into four areas including Formal Authority (FA), Demonstrator, Facilitator, and Delegator. The FA approach focuses on content and can be very instructor-centred. The educator explains the theories, principles, concepts, or terms that the student requires for learning and arranges them into a sequenced set of goals or objectives. Evaluations play significant roles in course planning because they allow the instructor to discover the extent to which learning has taken place.

Demonstrator Approach, according to Grasha and Grasha (1996), focuses on the performance of an academic procedure. The educator defines the steps an expert in the field would use to fulfil required tasks as well as the standards that would specify proficiency in employing these procedures. The instructor then establishes situations in which these procedures can be performed and results obtained. The instructor may be the one who demonstrates the procedures; students may be the ones practicing the procedures, or some combination of both.

Teachers who employ a facilitator Model teaching style are apt to concentrate on activities. This teaching style stresses student-centred learning and there is much more duty placed on the students to be responsible for meeting the demands of various learning tasks. Facilitator teachers typically plan group activities that demand active learning, student-to-student collaboration and problem solving.

Teachers who practice a delegator teaching style are inclined to place control and responsibility for learning on individuals or groups of students. The

teachers with delegator teaching styles provide students opportunities to design and apply their own learning experiences and act in a consultative role.

There have been several studies focused on LSs. Bickel and Truscello (1996) stated that ESL students bring their preferences and experiences into the ESL classroom and they have their own LSs. Therefore, helping students to be self-aware of both styles and strategies has significant role. Dunn, Honigsfeld and Doolan (2009) concentrated on how LSs were evaluated in different institutions. They answered questions such as the impact of LSs on various aspects of teaching practices. Dunn (1984) disclosed that most learners identified their learning strengths correctly and Dunn and Dunn (1979) found that 30% of school age children were auditory learners and 40% were visual and 30% were Kinesthetic.

Concerning second/foreign language LSs, Reid (1987) reported that Chinese university students who were studying in the USA preferred Kinesthetic and tactile styles. Melton (1990) in his inquiry of LSs of Chinese university students found that they preferred Kinesthetic, tactile, and individual styles. In addition, Ford and Chen (2001) found approval for matching LSs to teaching method but they used field dependence/independence that is often considered as a measure of cognitive style.

In the context of Iran, Chabok (2014) compared LSs of 50 male and female seniorstudent teachers majoring English Language Teaching (ELT) and their use of self-initiation and repetition repair strategies. The participants' LSs were identified based on BarschLSs inventory (1996). Further, their teaching demonstrations after a thirteen-session course in Practice Teaching, were video recorded, transcribed and the errors made as well as the self-initiation and repair strategies used were quantified as the ratio of each repair strategy type to the total number of errors made. Moreover, the use of self-initiation and repair strategy by auditory and non-auditory participants was compared via a paired-samples t-test which revealed that self-initiation repair strategies were more common and that the preferred LSs among the participants did not affect their use of the two strategy types.

When teaching students with different LSs, teachers should remember probable differences in their own TSs and be ready to modify them to accommodate learners with different LSs so that the teaching will work for all

the students involved. This crucial condition has been underscored since mismatches between students' LSs in a language class and their teachers' TSs can hamper the process of learning and lead to negative attitudes toward the language class (Wallace & Oxford, 1992).

Many Iranian EFL teachers need to consider individual differences. They totally ignore learners' cognitive and affective preferences in their teaching and do nothing to match the instruction to the needs of individual learners. There is no needs analysis before planning materials for the EFL learners; instructional designers do not attempt to perform need analysis to recognize the learners' prior knowledge, motives, attitudes, LSs and their prior learning experiences. However, such investigations seem necessary since learners' tendency and character will affect learners' willingness to benefit from the instruction that is proposed, and influence educational development (Hashemian & Adibpour, 2012). This is partly due to the large size of classrooms and the apparent stylistic diversity among learners, on the one hand, and the pedagogical disregard for basing curriculum development on established needs analysis procedures, on the other. Moreover, instructional materials are often fixed, unvaried, and static and hardly adaptive to the varying needs of the diverse population of Iranian learners receiving the same level of instruction across the country. Instead, it is EFL learners who are expected to fit into the language learning system that represents a one-size-fits-all policy. Practicing teachers are either unaware of individual differences among their learners or fail to accommodate variation in learning while teaching owing to executive problems.

The deficiencies that Iranian EFL learners demonstrate in foreign language learning might imply that research conducted over the last few years has failed to reflect real individual attributes and the TSs that can be used to inform effective teaching practice. Therefore, it seems quite necessary to inspect teachers and learners' styles to spot probable discrepancies. This study, thus, investigated Iranian high school EFL learners' LSs along with their EFL teachers' TSs. It employed the most popular model that derives from Fleming's VARK Theory, which divided learners into three groups: Visual, Auditory or Tactile/kinaesthetic to answer the following research questions:

1. What are Iranian English teachers' stylistic preferences?
2. What are Iranian EFL learners' stylistic preferences?

Method

Participants

The present study was carried out in four language high schools in Rasht. The participants consisted of 30 EFL teachers (19 female and 11 male) and 300 foreign language learners (175 females and 125 males). Teachers' age ranged from 27 to 59 years old and their selection was based on convenient sampling. Moreover, 300 homogeneous EFL learners who were within the rage of 16 to 19 years old were selected based on their performance on Oxford Placement Test (OPT) test (version 2, 2001) and those who fell with a particular score band ($\pm$ 1SD from the mean score) were selected. This was done to avoid any proficiency related differences in their LSs. The learners' first language was Persian.

Instrumentation

Three instruments were used to collect the research data: The OPT version 2 (2001), the Barsch Learning Style Questionnaire (BLSQ, 1991), and Grasha-Riechmann (1996) Teaching Style Inventory (GRTSI). BLSQ consists of 24 items that categorize learners as having visual, auditory or tactile preferences about the ways that they wanted to understand new information in a learning context and their perception of their preferences for learning. Eight questionnaire items on the learning-style inventory matched each of the three learning-style categories. Students ranked the questionnaire items by selecting the extent to which the statement presented referred to their preference to learning or processing information.

The GRTSI contains 40 items that help teachers to identify five TSs of Expert Teachers who transmit information (items 1-8), FA Teachers who present structured instruction (itmes 9-16), Personal Model (PM) Teachers who teach by providing examples (items 17-24), Facilitator Teachers (FT) who act as consultants that guide students (items 25-32) and Delegator Teachers (DT) who assign tasks and act as resources (items 33-40). Based on the preferred teaching routines preferred by each group, combinations of the five styles create four teaching "clusters" of: 1) teacher-centred, knowledge acquisition, 2) teacher-centred, role modelling, 3) student-centred, problem solving, and 4) student-centred, facilitative (Grasha, 1996).

Procedure

First, the OPT was administered to select a sample of homogeneous Iranian EFL at the beginning of the study. Next, the questionnaires were administered at four high schools in Rasht to elicit EFL learners' preferred LSs and EFL teachers 'TSs self-reported styles. The theoretical framework that was employed to categorize different styles of teaching was adopted from Grasha (1996). The participating students and teachers were asked to complete the questionnaires within 30 minutes at the end of one of their classes.

Design

This ex-post facto study employed two questionnaires to inspect Iranian teachers and learners' TSs and LSs in teaching and learning English.

Results

Prior to the main study, the reliability, internal consistency, was estimated for the 40-items GRTSI and the 24-items of BLSQ through a pilot study on 15 EFL learners and 15 EFL teachers. The values of Cronbach's Alpha were found to be (.81) and (.76), respectively. To answer the research questions, we relied on the descriptive statistics obtained from the research data including the Mean as a measure of central tendency, the Standard Deviation, and the frequency of responding teachers and students selecting each style.

Iranian English Teachers' TSs

The particular behaviours that teachers preferred in the classroom were reflected in the teaching style questionnaire. The findings showed that several patterns described the styles of the teachers. These patterns included the teacher as Expert or transmitter of information; FA teacher that sets standards and defines acceptable ways of doing things; PM teacher that teaches by illustration and direct example; a Facilitator that guides and directs students by asking questions, exploring options, suggesting alternatives; and a Delegator that develops students' ability to function autonomously. Almost all teachers reported possession of varying degrees of each of the five TSs. Table 1 presents the dominant cluster of TSs for every individual teacher.

Table 1

Item Statistics for the Teachers' TSs Questionnaire

	M	SD	N
1. Facts, concepts, and principles are the most important things that students should acquire.	3.46	1.04	30

2. I set high standards for students in this class.	3.46	1.16	30
3. What I say and do models appropriate ways for students to think about issues in the content.	4.70	.701	30
4. My teaching goals and methods address a variety of student LSs.	3.43	1.25	30
5. Students typically work on course projects alone with little supervision from me.	3.03	1.24	30
6. Sharing my knowledge and expertise with students is very important to me.	4.06	.63	30
7. I give students negative feedback when their performance is unsatisfactory.	2.73	1.31	30
8. Activities in this class encourage students to develop their own ideas about content issues.	3.73	1.20	30
9. I spend time consulting with students on how to improve their work on individual and/or group projects.	2.40	1.13	30
10. Activities in this class encourage students to develop their own ideas about content issues.	2.93	1.36	30
11. What I have to say about a topic is important for students to acquire a broader perspective on the issues in that area.	4.06	.784	30
12. Students would describe my standards and expectations as somewhat strict and rigid.	3.43	1.27	30
13. I typically show students how and what to do in order to master course content.	4.00	1.11	30
14. Small group discussions are employed to help students develop their ability to think critically.	3.40	**1.45**	30
15. Students design one of more self-directed learning experiences.	2.50	1.30	30
16. I want students to leave this course well prepared for further work in this area.	4.80	**.40**	30
17. It is my responsibility to define what students must learn and how they should learn it.	4.03	.96	30
18. Examples from my personal experiences often are used to illustrate points about the material.	4.03	1.03	30
19. I guide students' work on course projects by asking questions, exploring options, and suggesting alternative ways to do things.	3.70	1.29	30
20. Developing the ability of students to think and work independently is an important goal.	4.56	.50	30
21. Lecturing is a significant part of how I teach each of the class sessions.	2.93	1.43	30
22. I provide very clear guidelines for how I want tasks completed in this course.	3.46	1.27	30
23. I often show students how they can use various principles and concepts.	3.13	1.35	30
24. Course activities encourage students to take initiative and responsibility for their learning.	2.93	1.43	30
25. Students take responsibility for teaching part of the class sessions.	2.90	1.39	30
26. My expertise is typically used to resolve disagreements about content issues.	3.73	1.14	30
27. This course has very specific goals and objectives that I want to	4.46	.50	30

accomplish			
28. Students receive frequent verbal and/or written comments on their performance.	4.43	.50	30
29. I solicit student advice about how and what to teach in this course.	4.36	.49	30
30. Students set their own pace for completing independent and/or group projects.	4.33	.47	30
31. Students might describe me as a "storehouse of knowledge" who dispenses the fact, principles, and concepts they need.	3.10	1.37	30
32. My expectations for what I want students to do in this class are clearly defined in the syllabus.	3.63	1.21	30
33. Eventually, many students begin to think like me about course content.	3.56	1.10	30
34. Students can make choices among activities in order to complete course requirements.	2.16	1.01	30
35. My approach to teaching is similar to a manager of a work group who delegates tasks and responsibilities to subordinates.	**1.76**	.43	30
36. There is more material in this course than I have time available to cover it.	3.76	.97	30
37. My standards and expectations help students develop the discipline the need to learn.	4.40	.49	30
38. Students might describe me as a "coach" who works closely with someone to correct problems in how they think and behave.	4.23	.43	30
39. I give students a lot of personal support and encouragement to do well in this course.	**4.76**	.43	30
40. I assume the role of a resource person who is available to students whenever they need help.	4.66	.47	30

TSs comprised of 40 items that examined the teachers' preferred TS. The teachers' rating for the questionnaire items showed that "*giving students a lot of personal support and encouragement to do well in the course.*" was the most dominant teaching style(X =4.76). However item (35) "*My approach to teaching is similar to a manager of a work group who delegates tasks and responsibilities to subordinates.*" was the least favoured teaching style in this category (X= 1.76).

Although teachers were highly consistent in terms of their responses to item (16)" I want students to leave this course well prepared for further work in this area." (SD=.40), they had relatively different views towards item (14) "Small *group discussions are employed to help students develop their ability to think critically.*" and reported divergent views towards it.

Table 2
Frequency for the TSs Questionnaire

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Expert	4	13.3	13.3	13.3
	FA	4	13.3	13.3	26.7
	PM	6	20.0	20.0	46.7
	Facilitator	13	43.3	43.3	90.0
	Delegator	3	10.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

The Facilitator teaching style was higher in proportion when compared with the other TSs. 43.3% of the teachers were facilitators, ($f = 13$). Yet, 20% of the teachers shared PM characteristics, ($f = 6$). Expert and FA teachers had the same proportions; 13.3 percent of the teachers reported that they preferred FA style while another 13.3 % were opting for Expert teaching style, ($f = 4$). The Delegators shared lower percentages, 10.0% ($f = 3$).

Iranian EFL Learners ' LSs

The learning style inventory had 24 statements that were assigned values and these values were used in the scoring process. The selections, values, and descriptions are listed below. Three LSs were defined after the respondents completed the test. They were divided into Visual (sight), Auditory (sound), and Tactile/Kinesthetic (small/large motor movements).

Table 3
Item Statistics for the LSs Questionnaire

	Mean	SD	N
1. Can remember more about a subject through listening than reading.	3.06	1.11	300
2. Follow written directions better than oral directions.	3.13	1.04	300
3. Like to write things down or take notes for a visual review.	3.13	1.04	300
4. Bear down extremely hard with a pen or pencil when writing.	3.26	**.86**	300
5. Require explanations of diagrams, graphs, or visual directions.	2.93	.98	300
6. Enjoy working with tools.	2.66	1.29	300
7. Are skilful with and enjoy developing and making graphs and charts.	3.06	1.11	300
8. Can tell if sounds match when presented with pairs of sounds.	3.06	.98	300
9. Remember best by writing things down several times.	3.13	.89	300
10. Can understand and follow directions on maps.	2.80	1.09	300
11. Do better at academic subjects by listening to lectures and tapes.	2.86	1.27	300
12. Play with coins or keys in pocket.	2.93	**1.43**	300
13. Learn to spell better by repeating the letters aloud than by writing the word on paper.	2.46	1.38	300
14. Can better understand a news article by reading about it in the paper than by listening to radio.	3.06	.98	300
15. Chew gum, smoke, or snack during studies.	2.73	1.25	300

16. Feel the best way to remember is to picture it in your head.	2.86	1.16	300
17. Learning spelling by "finger spelling" the words.	**1.80**	.99	300
18. Would rather listen to a good lecture or speech than read about the same material in a book.	2.06	1.25	300
19. Are good at solving and working on jigsaw puzzles and mazes.	3.46	1.00	300
20. Grip objects in hands during learning period.	**1.80**	1.12	300
21. Prefer listening to the news on the radio rather than reading about it in a newspaper.	3.60	1.06	300
22. Obtain information on an interesting subject by reading relevant materials.	3.20	1.09	300
23. Feel very comfortable touching others, hugging, handshaking, etc.	2.80	1.09	300
24. Follow oral directions better than written ones.	**3.80**	.99	300

With respect to the learning style inventory that scrutinized the students' perceptions of their LSs, item (24) received the highest mean rank (X= 3.80). This item evaluated the students' opinion towards the "*Following oral directions better than written ones.*" On the contrary, the lowest mean rank was reported for item (17) that examined the students' views towards "*Learning spelling by "finger spelling" the words.*" (X= 1.80) and item (20) that asked the respondents about "*Gripping objects in hands during learning period.*" (X=1.80).

Concerning the degree of dissimilarity among the responses provided by the students, item (12) had the highest standard deviation (SD= 1.457). This item asked the participants to rate their opinions towards "*Playing with coins or keys in pocket.*" Yet, the highest uniformity among the responses was observed for item (12). This item inspected the students' rating of "*Bearing down extremely hard with a pen or pencil when writing"* (SD= .86). Table 4 presents learners based on their preferred LSs.

Table 4
Frequency for the TS Questionnaire

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Visual	140	46.7	46.7	46.7
	Auditory	70	23.3	23.3	70.0
	Kinesthetic	90	30.0	30.0	100.0
	Total	300	100.0	100.0	

With a percentage of 46.7%, Visual learning style was the most popular among Iranian EFL learners (*f* = 140) compared to the Kinesthetic and

Auditory LSs with percentages of 30, $f = 90$, and 23.30, $f = 70$, respectively. The results showed that almost half of all the subjects were visually oriented.

Discussion

The findings emerging from this study must be discussed with caution because the present study relied exclusively on research data obtained from two distinct self-reported questionnaires examining teachers' TSs and learners' LSs without any intention to relate the two or tap the interaction between the two. Moreover, it was virtually impossible to detect the extent to which teachers advocating different styles were aware of their learners' stylistic preferences, knew about the visual orientation of the majority of them, or actually employed techniques compatible to the students' LSs. Hence, the findings might be discussed in terms of existing literature and with regard to implications for teachers, syllabus designers, and educators.

Most of the participants in this study were found to be visually-oriented. This is consistent with what Dirksen (1990) found about Chinese second language learners. A preference for the visual style that was reported by the majority of the participants of this study suggests that English teaching should be designed so that this group of learners can have more visual activities.

However, it runs counter to those of Rossi-Le (1995), Melton (1990), Dirksen (1990), and Dunn et al. (1990) who found Kinesthetic LS as the most popular among EFL learners. The results depicted that simply 30% of the participants in this study were Kinesthetic.

Visual learners do benefit from instructional opportunities when both auditory and visual presentation techniques are employed in parallel and in line with the proficiency level of learners. For intermediate learners, however, such aids may comprise various instructional movies, pictorial tasks designed to elicit particular language as well as power point presentations. Such activities can be employed by the teachers at various stages of the teaching process to engage learners more actively in the learning process, to raise their motivation and help them learn more actively and interactively. Hence, if teachers wish to maximize the learning outcomes for their students, they have to take this Visual orientation.

Of course, inclusion of visual aids should be treated with utmost caution. Teachers need to tailor them to the course objectives, on the one hand, and to consider the students' Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), on the other hand, as suggested by Vygotsky (1978). ZPD is a major concept of the Sociocultural Theory according to which the potential for cognitive development is limited to ones' ZPD or the area of exploration for which the student is cognitively prepared, but requires help and social interaction, or scaffolding, to fully develop (Briner, 1999, as cited in Kozulin, Gindis, Ageyev, & Miller, 2003). In the context of classroom, it is the role of the teacher to identify that area and to offer his/her scaffolding based on various devices, auditory or visual, as a support to help learners to achieve the educational goals.

The results also depicted that the second prevailing style among the participating learners was Kinesthetic (30%). These learners favour active learning and might benefit from various kinds of learning tasks and activities. A combination of learning tasks and visual aids is assumed to highly maximize learning outcomes for Kinesthetic learners (Petterson, 2004).

Scrutiny of the results obtained from the teachers' TSs questionnaire revealed that merely 10% of the participating teachers were dominantly Delegates in their TS advocating the use of learning tasks. They favour developing students' capability to act independently. Nonetheless, a few of the Delegate teachers reported that they tried to help learners perceive themselves as independent learners. In addition to its numerous instructional advantages for educational systems and individual learners, this type of teaching style may cause problems for learners who tend to be anxious when they are asked to work independently. Therefore, it is crucial for such teachers to take students' readiness for independent work into account to avoid affective negative side effects that may drastically threaten the outcomes and generate feelings of uneasiness and apprehension.

In contrast, 26% preferred either the Expert Style (13.3%) or the FA style (13%). Expert teachers might be described as those who believe that they have the necessary knowledge and skill for teaching their students. They attempt to achieve and maintain their expert position by displaying detailed knowledge and stimulating students to enhance their competence. Expert teachers try to make certain that their students are well prepared for the learning process. While the information, knowledge, and skills that the teachers possess are

useful, if overused, the display of knowledge can be threatening for inexperienced students. Thus, this kind of mismatch between expert teachers' TSs and unskilled Iranian EFL learners who prefer Visual or Kinesthetic LSs may demotivate learners and minimize or delay their achievement of course objectives.

Additionally, (13.3%) of the teachers reported that they preferred the FA style. These teachers gain authority among learners because of their knowledge. Grasha and Grasha, (1996) described FA teachers as the ones who usually try to provide positive and negative feedback, set learning goals and predictions for students. They are concerned about the correct, acceptable, and standard ways of doing things and meticulous enough to reflect on such issues. Despite all these virtues, however, a strong investment in FA teaching style, according to Sand (1994) can lead to rigid, standardized ways of managing students and their concerns.

Furthermore, (20%) of the teachers preferred the PM style. PM teachers believe in teaching through offering personalized examples and setting a model for teaching their students how to think and behave. PM teachers direct their learners by showing them how to do things, and by encouraging them to observe and copy or imitate the models and examples that are set for them to follow. This type of teaching style might seem appropriate for the visually oriented learners; however, the extent to which learners participation and creative contribution to the learning tasks and activities is maintained is very critical.

Approximately, 43.3% of the respondent teachers favoured the Facilitator Style. Facilitator teachers acknowledge the personal nature of teacher-student interactions and direct their students by asking questions, exploring options, suggesting alternatives, and encouraging them to develop criteria to make informed choices. To them, the overall goal is to develop in students the capacity for independent action and responsibility. They work with students on projects in a consultative fashion and provide much support and encouragement. The personal flexibility, the focus on students' needs and goals, and the willingness to explore options and alternative courses of action to achieve them are the main advantages of this group of teachers (Grasha, 1996).

However, this teaching style seems time-consuming and can make students uncomfortable if it is not used in a positive way.

The importance of the role of individual differences in the rate of the learning process and the final level of mastery achieved has long attracted expert applied linguists. One of such differences relates to stylistic diversities that exist among learners who might opt for varying ways of learning and among teachers who may consciously or subconsciously tend to rely on particular methodological options. The findings obtained from the present enquiry underscore the possibility of identifying learners' stylistic propensities as a point of departure in curriculum development. Awareness of such differences will definitely enable the educators and syllabus designers to select relevant aims and objectives as well as teaching materials that are compatible with learners' preferences. Moreover, based on initial scrutiny of learners' stylistic variation, practicing teachers can get invaluable insights into what presentation and practice techniques and activities to deploy to appeal to the learners and to accommodate all styles.

Of course, teachers' awareness of the significant role of LSs has to be fostered through pre-service and in-service teacher training courses. They need to be reminded that the ultimate goal in any educational centre is to optimize learning for all learners based on identification of their subjective and objective needs either through systematic formal needs analysis programs designed by the ministry of education and higher education or through teacher-led informal procedures applied by teachers.

Since styles are more stable and not subject to immediate change, some may take them for granted and exclude them from scholarly scrutiny. However, one fertile research soil is identification of such learning and teaching styles not merely for the purpose of modification but with the aim of determining the match or mismatches between them. Such research will be illuminating since both Iranian EFL learners and teachers are influenced by their learning experiences and may remain subconscious to their stylistic preferences.

It should be noted that the present study was based on self-reported data obtained from Iranian EFL teachers and learners with no intent to compare or contrast them. More valid data obtained from observation of teachers' actual practice and learners' performances under different teaching styles is required to complement the findings from this study and to more vividly capture the

very nature of the interaction between learners' and teachers' stylistic propensities.

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