

The relationship between Interaction Types and Language Learning Styles

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Abstract

Language learning styles are among the main factors that help determine how –and how well –our students learn a second or foreign language. In the traditional classroom, the primary mode of interaction was face-to-face dialogue between the teacher and the student. This study presents an analysis of the types of interaction in Jihad-e-Daneshgahi Institute, among 45 EFL students in Miyaneh city, and the relationship between interaction types and language learning styles. The data were gathered through: Key English Test which consists of three parts, Part A: Reading and writing, Part B: listening, Part C: speaking, and Grasha-Riechmann student learning style scales (Grasha, 1996) was used to determine the role of language learning styles which consists of 5-point likert-scale instrument. . For analyzing the gathered data between interaction types and language learning styles Cronbach α was used. The questionnaires were distributed among participants in one session, Key English Test was taken in the next session, and then the data was inserted into SPSS. Finally, Findings indicated that there is negative relationship between interaction types and language learning styles.

Key words: Interaction types, Learning Styles, Grasha-Reichmann, Reliability, Second Language Acquisition

1. Introduction

The field of second or foreign language has undergone many trends over the years. For centuries, attention has been paid to teaching or learning styles, based on the belief that, to be an effective ESL / EFL teacher, one must deal with a class- a group of individuals with different needs and ways of learning, often with diverse cultural backgrounds. Thus, teachers need to be aware and informed of learning and teaching styles and strategies. The result of the studies such as Input, Interaction, second- language acquisition, native language and foreign language acquisition in 1980's indicate that learner's desires are not always the sole matter and teachers have lots of effect on teaching and learning process, pedagogical milieu and the aims the education ministry has set.

Goffman argued interaction is of major importance in sociology and should not be overlooked. In student-student interaction, the instructor should encourage peer-to-peer communication, it is just as essential. To prevent a boring, repetitive, and isolating learning environment, the instructor should build activities and assignments that ignite classroom discussion. These discussions help students from feeling sequestered from one another and instead create a dynamic sense of community.

If instructor have had consistent interaction with classroom—on a personal and group level—it helps them support academic expectations among students and gives teachers a presence they can count on. It's not just talking about required forms of communication (e.g., timely responses to email inquiries, assignment feedback), but also leveraging educational

technology so that teaching strengths shine. Long (1996) claimed that in interaction hypothesis more emphasis is placed on the importance of corrective feedback during interaction. "Negotiating for meaning" is seen as the opportunity for language development. What learners need is not necessarily simplification of the linguistic forms but rather an opportunity to interact with other speakers, working together to reach mutual comprehension. Research has demonstrated that conversational interaction can aid comprehension in the L2. Research in to the role of interaction in L2 learning originated in the early 1980s. For example, Krashen (1978) claimed that comprehensible input was a necessary and sufficient condition for L2 acquisition to occur. SLA researchers (e.g. Hatch 1978) have argued that learners acquire language through conversation. In using conversation to interact with others, learners gradually acquire the competence that underlies the ability to use language. Hatch (1978: 404) puts the position in this way: "one learns how to do conversation, one learns how to interact verbally, and out of this interaction syntactic structures are developed".

In interaction hypothesis the nature and effects of interaction between learners and teachers in classroom settings, and between learners and other learners in either laboratory or classroom settings are investigated. Interaction was face-to-face dialogue between teacher and student (Anderson, 2003b). The primacy of interaction modes shifted. Delivery of education has evolved into a continuum with traditional face-to-face classes. One noted shift in interaction pattern dynamics is increased importance of student/content interaction in courses (Bernard et al., 2009).

Language learning styles are actions and thoughts students apply for the purpose of comprehending, remembering, producing, and managing information and skills for language learning. (El-Dinary 1993). Learning styles are the "special thoughts or behaviors that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information." (O'Malley & Chamot 1990). Learning styles are closely associated to individual characteristics and preferences which reflect on the way a person perceive and interact with the environment, as well as respond and experience the learning process (Kazu, 2009).

Learning styles are "the overall patterns that give general direction to learning behavior" (Cornett, 1983, p. 9). Learning style is the biologically and developmentally imposed set of characteristics that make the same teaching method wonderful for some and terrible for others (Dunn & Griggs, 1988, p. 3).

Ehrman and Oxford (1990) cited 9 major style dimensions relevant to L2 learning, although many more style aspects might also prove to be influential. Grasha-Richman Student Learning Style Scale (GRSLSS) (Grasha, 1993), measures three paired styles: social (competitive/ collaborative), emotional (avoidant/ participatory), and need for structure (dependent/ independent). Grasha-Richman Student Learning Style Scales (Grasha, 1996) was originally designed for students engaged in face-to-face classroom situations. In this study, this instrument was administered learners.

1.1. Statement of the problem

Social interaction is the process by which we act and react to those around us. There are different types of social interaction: exchange, competition, cooperation, conflict and correction. According to Long's (1996) revised interaction hypothesis, interaction plays a key role in driving second language development forward, because a primary source of positive and negative data (i.e. what is possible and not possible to say in the target language) is made available to learners during meaningful interaction with a more competent speaker.

People do not understand everything when they are born, but have to learn everything so that they are able to understand. Some people learn several subjects very well, but some people have learning problems. As Williams & Burden (1997) point out, that can only be answered by investigating learning strategies. Wenden (1987a:7-8) says "Learning strategies are the various operations that learners use in order to make sense of their learning". Also, Williams & Burden (1997) indicated that when students are involved in a learning task, they have several resources which they use in different ways to finish or solve the task, so this can be termed process of learning strategy.

Objective of the present study is to determine the interaction types in student-student interaction and also to determine the types of language learning styles of EFL students of Jahad-e-Daneshgahi English Foreign Language Institute in Miyaneh city, and also to know whether there is a significant relationship between these interaction types and language learning styles.

1.2. Significance of the study

The result of the study can give some benefits both for the teacher who teaches English to learners and the students themselves. The teacher can get description of how to use the teaching techniques in teaching English to English learners where it should be suited to their characteristics, and also to recognize sorts of learning styles which are to be used by learners. The result of this research is expected to be able to improve the quality of interaction hypothesis and determine the role of language learning strategies used by learners. In other words, the benefit of the study is to show the greatest interaction types, teachers pick to teach for learners successes in the classroom, and also show the role of language learning styles in individual differences.

1.3. Review of the Literature

According to Long's (1996) revised interaction hypothesis, interaction plays a key role in driving second language development forward, because a primary source of positive and negative data (i.e. what is possible and not possible to say in the target language) is made available to learners during meaningful interaction with a more competent speaker.

Interaction also provides learners with opportunities to control the input to some extent, as they ask their interlocutors to modify their speech in ways that make the input more accessible and more likely to be integrated into the learners' developing inter language system (Gass 1997; Long 1983, 199; Pica 1994).

Interaction has long been identified as a defining and critical component of the educational process (Anderson, 2003a). Interaction between teachers, students and content occurs in all forms of education. Across the spectrum of distance education formats, Moore (1989) identified three modes of interaction that must be present: student/teacher, student/student, and student/content. Student/teacher interaction can take the form of face-to-

face exchange between teacher and learner, as well as both synchronous and asynchronous digital communication in online or blended settings. Student/student interaction includes communication among classmates for the purpose of completing a course related activity and informal discourse about class subject matter. Student/content interaction refers to student engagement with course resources. Moore defined student/content interaction to be “the process of intellectually interacting with the content that results in changes in the learner’s understanding, the learner’s perspective, or the cognitive structures of the learner’s mind” (p. 2).

This study dealt with validity and reliability of Student Learning Style Inventory developed by Grasha and Reichmann 1996. Grasha (1996) defines learning style as child’s preferences in thinking and interaction with other children in different classroom environments and experiences. Grasha and Reichmann (1974) separated students into six groups: the ones who learn on their own (independent), the ones who are dependent to their teacher in learning (dependent), the ones who cooperate with others (collaborative), the one who compete with others (competitive), the ones who take part in activities (contributive), and the ones who are shy and uninterested in learning (avoidant).

Grasha’s (1996) studies illustrated that independent students liked studying alone and that their learning abilities are enough. These students consider learning the subject independently important. They build up their knowledge on their own.

Collaborative students like sharing their ideas and studying with their teachers and classmates. These students expand their knowledge in group and team work, and they are more successful when they are in a group work. The disadvantage of these students is that they are too dependent to other students and they are not good at studying alone (Grasha, 1996). Competitive students focus on learning as “I should be better than others”. They compete for the award. They like to attract attraction, and they want to be remembered by their success in the class. These students' have problems with other students and with cooperative learning environments; the students having the contributive style are defined as good individuals. They like going to classroom and taking part in activities. Characteristically, they are more willing to do more than expected, and they give priority to the needs of other students (Grasha, 1996); the avoidant students are not so enthusiastic about learning and taking part in classroom activities. Generally, they do not join their teachers and other students. They are indifferent to what is happening in the classroom (Grasha, 1996). This scale was developed by Grasha and Reichmann. In the original form of the scale which was developed in 1974, the objective was to determine three learning styles; namely, dependent, independent and cooperative styles. Later characteristics are summarized above-to include 6 styles each of which is composed of 10 items and came up with the current form of the scale.

1.4. Research Questions

To achieve the purpose of the study that is to investigate the Interaction types in Student-Student Interaction and the Role of Language Learning Strategies in Individual Differences, the following Research questions were addressed:

1. Is there a statistically significant relationship between Interaction Types and Language Learning Styles?
2. Is there any significant relationship between Language Learning Styles and Key English Test?

2. Method

2.1. Participants

The sample group in this study consisted of 45 male and female EFL learners from Miyaneh city in the Northwest of Iran. These participants were randomly selected from EFL Jahad-e-Daneshgahi English language institution.

Through analysis of the study, a total of 45 students were selected where 20 students were from guidance schools and 25 students were from high schools. 45 students took the GRSLSS questionnaires and Key English Test from among 45 participants.

The students held 7th to 9th (n=20) from guidance school and high schools. (n=25) grades with English experiences ranging from 1 year up to 4 years. In terms of age, students were less than 20 years of age. They were in the age group of 14 till 19. For the profile of English classes, 7 students were in the level of Family and Friends (5b), whereas the rest of the learners were reported in top notch level.

Permission of authorities was obtained to hand out the Grasha-Reichman Student Learning Style Scale Inventory and Key English Test among students. They were informed about the purpose of the study and they were provided with instructions for completing the questionnaires. They were assured that the collected information would be just for research purposes and also kept confidential. The learners took the questionnaires home, filled them out and returned them the other day.

2.2. Research Instruments

The following instruments were used for data gathering:

2.2.1. Grasha-Reichman Students Learning Style Scale (GRSLSS)

It is the most common instrument used for determining learner's learning style. In this study, GRSLSS was examined in terms of reliability and consistency. Grasha-Richman Student Learning Style Scale (GRSLSS) (Grasha, 1993), measures three paired styles: social (competitive/ collaborative), emotional (avoidant/ participatory), and need for structure (dependent/ independent). Grasha and Reichmann (1974) separated students into six groups: the ones who learn on their own (independent), the ones who are dependent to their teacher in learning (dependent), the ones who cooperate with others (collaborative), the one who compete with others (competitive), the ones who take part in activities (contributive), and the ones who are shy and uninterested in learning (avoidant).

Table 1, Reliability statistics of Grasha-Reichmann 6 subscales

Reliability statistics of 6 subscales

Sub-scales	Cronbach's Alpha	N of items
Independent	0.658	10
avoidant	0.570	10
Collaborative	0.674	10
Dependent	0.800	10
Competitive	0.795	10
Participant	0.739	10

The questionnaire consisted of 60 items, 6 styles each of which is composed of 10 items. All items were assessed using 5-point likert-scale instrument. Each item asked participants to respond using a five point rating scale from "1= strongly disagree" to "5= strongly agree". Ranging from (1) = strongly disagree (2) = moderately disagree (3) = undecided (4) = moderately agree (5) = strongly agree. The Respondents were to answer all the items in the questionnaire by labeling their reference on each item using the 5-point likert-scale provided.

In this study, Cronbach α correlation number was used in the determination of the consistency of the items of the scale with the whole scale and with the learning styles they are related to. The cronbach alpha internal consistency was 0.89 for all the items of subscales. Cronbach's Alpha for Independent sub-dimension is 0.65 percent, avoidant sub-dimension, 0.57, collaborative sub-dimension, 0.67, Dependent sub-dimension, 0.80, competitive sub-dimension, 0.79, and for Participant sub-dimension is 0.73percent. These findings can be interpreted as the GRSLS's reliability is high in the Dependent dimension, and low in Avoidant dimension. This study suggests that randomly selected students of guidance and high school in Miyaneh city are more dependent, 0.80, and less Avoidant 0.57.

2.2.2. KEY English Test (KET) for Schools

English Key Test format for Schools is made up of three papers developed to test students' English skills. The Key English Test consisted of three parts, Part A: Reading and writing, Part B: listening, Part C: speaking. In part A, Students need to be able to read texts from signs, newspapers and magazines and understand the main points.

Reading included 8 parts, which were composed of 55 questions. Writing included 1part, composed of 2 questions. Listening part consists of 5 parts and 25 questions. Speaking part consists of 2 parts. Students take part in a conversation, asking and answering questions.

2.3. Data Collection procedure

This study was performed in Miyaneh English Language Institutes. Permission of authorities was obtained to hand out the questionnaires of Grasha-Reichman Student Learning Style Scale Inventory and Key English Test among students.

They were informed about the purpose of the study and they were provided with instructions for completing the questionnaires. They were assured that the collected information would be just for research purposes and also kept confidential. The learners took the questionnaires home, filled them out and returned them the other day.

2.4. Data Analysis

Different kinds of statistical analyses were used in this study. For first research question which deals with possible relationship between student's interaction types and learning styles, Pearson correlation were used. Pearson correlations are based on the assumption that both variables are continuous scores (Brown, 2005). Correlation between sets of data is a measure of how well they are related. The full name is the Pearson Product Moment Correlation or PPMC. It shows the linear relationship between two sets of data.

In order to answer the second question, finding the relationship between Learning Styles and Key English Test, Pearson correlation was run. GRSLSS was examined in terms of reliability and consistency. Cronbach α correlation number was used to determine the consistency of the items of the scale with the whole scale and with the learning styles they are related to. This coefficient was used as a criterion for reliability, and first was used in the determination of the reliability of the whole 60 items of questionnaire, then in the determination of the reliability of each of sub-scales. Cronbach's alpha is a measure of internal consistency that is how closely related a set of items are as a group. It is considered to be a measure of scale reliability. A "high" value for alpha does not imply that the measure is unidimensional. Technically, cronbach alpha is not a statistical test; it is a coefficient of reliability (or consistency). Also, all the statistical analysis was performed in the environment of the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) software, version 16.

3. Results

As discussed earlier, to examine whether there is a significant relationship between Interaction types and language learning styles, Pearson's rho correlation was used. Analysis of these correlations showed that there is negative relationship between score 2 and subscales. But in one case, with probability of %99, there is significant negative relationship between score 2 and collaborative sub-dimension with Correlation coefficient of -0.424**, and significant correlation of 0.04, as it has been showed in the table 3.1, by two stars. It means that students more like collaborating with each other in interaction than competing or participating, on the other hand, if learners get high grades in score 2 or interaction types exam (oral exam), it shows that they are collaborative.

2. Spearman's rho correlations of sub-scale's items with score1 &2

	Score1	score2	Independent	Avoidant	Collaborative	Dependent	Competitive	Participant
Score1	1	0.230	0.061	-0.47	-0.242	-0.145	-0.063	-0.187
Pearson correlation			0.711	0.761	0.113	0.393	0.684	0.218
Sig. (2-tailed)		0.129						
N	45	45	40	44	44	37	44	45
Score2				0.072	-0.424**	-0.209		-0.87
Pearson correlation	0.230	1		0.641	0.004	0.215	-0.107	0.572
Sig. (2-tailed)							0.488	
N	0.129	45		44	44	37	44	45
	45							

According to the table 3.1, correlation coefficient between score 2(Interaction Types) and Independent sub-dimension is 0.05, and significant correlation is 0.73, while 40 students are involved in this dimension. Correlation coefficient between score 2(Interaction Types) and avoidant sub-dimension is 0.07, and significant correlation is 0.64. Correlation coefficient between score 2(Interaction Types) and collaborative sub-dimension is - 0.42, and significant correlation is 0.04. Correlation coefficient between score 2(Interaction Types) and dependent sub-dimension is -0.20, and significant correlation is 0.21. Correlation coefficient between score 2(Interaction Types) and competitive sub-dimension is -0.10, and significant correlation is 0.48. Correlation coefficient between score 2(Interaction Types) and participant sub-dimension is- 0.08, and significant correlation is 0.57.

According to the table 3.1, correlation coefficient between score 1(Key English Test) and score 2(Interaction Types) is 0.23 percent, and significant correlation is 0.12. Correlation coefficient between score 1 and Independent sub-dimension is 0.61, and significant correlation is 0.71. Correlation coefficient between score 1 and avoidant sub-dimension is 0.04 and significant correlation is %76. Correlation coefficient between score 1 and collaborative sub-dimension is -0.24, significant correlation is 0.11. Correlation coefficient between score 1 and dependent sub-dimension is -0.14 and significant correlation is %39. Correlation coefficient between score 1 and competitive sub-dimension is -0.06 and significant correlation is 0.68. Correlation coefficient between score 1 and participant sub-dimension is -0.18 and significant correlation is 0.21.

3. Descriptive statistics of items of sub-scale, Frequency

		Missing	Minimum	Maximum	Std. Deviation
Var000062		0	1	5	1.64
Valid N(list wise)	5				440

In table 3.2, in the case of frequency of 60 items, missing items, std. deviation, minimum and maximum of items have been measured. In the frequency of item 1, missing items are 3, std. deviation, 1.27, minimum, 1.0 and maximum is 5.0. In the frequency of item 25, missing items are 0, std. deviation, 1.21, minimum, 1.0 and maximum is 5.0.

4. Discussion Conclusion and Suggestions

This thesis is entitled student's interaction types and the role of learning styles, since its main aim was to find out what are interaction types. It also describes student's learning styles in individual differences. Findings did not indicate that there is significant relationship between interaction types (score 2) and language learning styles. It showed that there is negative relationship between interaction types (score 2) and language learning styles. Just in one case, correlation between score 2 and collaborative sub-dimension, correlation is about -0.42, it means that there is significant negative relationship between interaction types and collaborative style.

The descriptive statistical analysis of the subscales showed that learners are more dependent. It means that they more rely on teachers than themselves in learning process. The frequency of items of sub-scales, the number of min and max of items and also standard deviation of the items was calculated and produced by descriptive statistics.

Several pedagogical implications immersed from the results of the present study. For example, the study could be an attempt to contribute to some reform process in Iran country, encouraging an effective implementation of the Language Learning Styles in Iran schools. This, of course, needs good control of the difficulties and challenges that might the implementations. The use of the Interaction Types in instruction provides a platform for students to have natural ways of learning and joining in the learning community in the classroom, in addition, it effectively engages students in the learner-centered environment of the classroom and can foster personal autonomy, responsibility and empowerment. (Gibson and Govendo, 1999).

Another implication of our findings is that it is suggested not to use the scale, without validity and reliability explorations of the scale, to determine learning styles of school students in; if necessary, it is recommended to use after adapting the scale to the conditions of the country. It is recommended that learners work in pairs because as other analysts have said this interaction type has been appreciated.

In order to complement the findings of the present study, some further research can be suggested. Much empirical research is needed to further understanding of the positive relationship between Interaction types and Language Learning Styles. Further investigation is needed to find ways to facilitate the adaptation of the scales to the conditions of the country and thereby enhance students' opportunities to work in groups and collaborate with each other to speak English accurately. Similar studies are needed to be done in other parts of the Iran

country in order to see whether the result will be the same as or different from the results of the present study.

One noted shift in interaction pattern dynamics is increased importance of student/content interaction in online courses (Bernard et al., 2009). Interaction has long been identified as a defining and critical component of the educational process (Anderson, 2003a), Interaction between teachers, students and content occurs in all forms of education. Moore (1989) identified three modes of interaction that must be present: student/teacher, student/student, and student/content. Student/teacher interaction can take the form of face-to-face exchange between teacher and learner.

The objective of the present study was to determine the kinds of student's interaction types profile and learning styles of guidance and high school students and also to know whether there is significant relationship between interaction types and learning styles.

Concerning the first research question, findings indicated that there is significant negative relationship between interaction types (score 2) and one language learning style (collaborative scale). To prove this claim we ran a Pearson' rho correlation between two variables. This investigation stated that learning depends on the interaction types. On the other hand, the more students collaborate with each other in the classroom, the better they learn the English language.

After all, regarding the second research question, there is negative relationship between Key English Test (score 1) and language learning styles. In this case, Cronbach α correlation number was used in the determination of the reliability of the GRSLSS's subscales. Reliability of the GRSLSS's subscales is generally at the medium level. It can be said to be 0.89. Among the three interaction groups, according to the table 8, three interaction groups play a more central role in the learning process. However, it could be found out from the co relational statistics, in interaction hypothesis Students give priority to student-student interaction. So we can assume that students appreciate to cooperate together, they can get strategies that will provide an optimal outcome for them.

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