NEAR EAST UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

ANALYSIS OF PREFERRED LEARNING STYLES AMONG ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNERS

MASTER THESIS

REZHEEN NABEE AHMED

NICOSIA

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Approval of the Graduate School of Educational Sciences

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with the academic rules and ethical guidelines of the Graduate School of Educational Sciences, Near East University. I also declare that as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all materials and results that are not original to this study.

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ABSTRACT

ANALYSIS OF PREFERRED LEARNING STYLES AMONG ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNERS

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M. A. Program, English Language Teaching

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The main emphasis of the study is todetermine the most and least commonly preferred learning styles among Kurdish English as a foreign language (EFL) learners studying at a public university in northern Iraq. To be able to reveal the most and least commonly preferred learning styles, a modified version of a quantitative questionnaire developed by O'Brien (1985) was employed. Through this questionnaire, data were obtained from the participants regarding their preferences on learning styles, which consisted solely of the Visual-Auditory-Kinesthetic (VAK) learning styles. The questionnaire was distributed to a total of 100 Kurdish EFL university learners. The collected findings were analyzed using a combination of descriptive statistics, an Anova test, and an independent sample t-test. The findings indicated that the EFL learners in the university in northern Iraq preferred visual learning styles the most, and the kinesthetic learning styles the least. The obtained findings also show that gender was influential over visual and kinesthetic styles where male students were found to prefer these types of learning styles more, compared to the female students. The difference was particularly significant for visual and kinesthetic learning methods, where male students responded more positively to these with a statistically significant manner. Males also preferred the

auditory learning methods more, compared to the females, but the difference for that particular was statistically insignificant.

Keywords: Auditory, English as a foreign language, kinesthetic, learning styles, visual.

ÖZET

YABANCI DİL OLARAK İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRENİMİNDE TERCİH EDİLEN ÖĞRENME ŞEKİLLERİ ANALİZİ

Rezheen Nabee Ahmed

M.A. PROGRAMI, İNGİLİZ DİLİ EĞİTİMİ ANA BİLİM DALI

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Çalışmanın ana vurgusu, Irak'ın kuzeyindeki bir devlet üniversitesinde kayıtlı olan Kürt öğrencileri arasında yabancı dil olarak İngilizce öğreniminde en çok ve en az tercih edilen öğrenme stillerini belirlemektir. En çok ve en az tercih edilen öğrenme stillerini ortaya çıkarabilmek için, O'Brien (1985) tarafından geliştirilen nicel anketin değiştirilmiş bir versiyonu kullanılmıştır. Bu anket aracılığıyla katılımcılardan, yalnızca Görsel-İşitsel-Kinestetik (VAK) öğrenme yöntemlerinden oluşan öğrenme stilleri konusundaki tercihlerine ilişkin veriler elde edilmiştir. Anket, toplam 100 ingilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenenKürt üniversite öğrencisine dağıtılmıştır. Toplanan bulgular, tanımlayıcı istatistikler, bir Anova testi ve bağımsız bir örnek t-testi kombinasyonu kullanılarak analiz edildi. Bulgular, kuzey Irak'taki üniversitedeki ingilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen öğrencilerinin görsel öğrenme stillerini en çok tercih ettiklerini ve kinestetik öğrenmeyi en az tercih ettiklerini göstermiştir. Elde edilen bulgular, cinsiyet faktötü öğrenme stilleri tercihi üzerinde etkili olduğunu göstermektedir. Bu bulgular ışığında, erkek öğrencilerin tüm öğrenme stillerini kadın öğrencilere göre daha fazla tercih ettiklerini göstermektedir.

***Anahtar Kelimeler*:** İşitsel, İngilizce yabancı dil olarak öğrenme, kinestetik, öğrenme stilleri, görsel, öğrenme stilleri.

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ABBREVIATIONS

EFL:	English as a Foreign Language
ESL:	English as a Second Language
FL:	Foreign Language
ELL:	English Languageand Literature
ELT:	English Language Teaching
LSSQ:	Learning Style Survey Questionnaire
L2:	Second Language
PLS:	Preferred Learning Styles
SL:	SecondLanguage
SPSS:	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
VAK:	Visual-Auditory-Kinesthetic
VARK:	Visual-Auditory-Reading/Writing-Kinesthetic

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides insights into learning styles used to teach and learn English in universities in northern Iraq. This chapter also looks at problems that emanate from using certain types of learning styles by English language university students in northern Iraq. It also sheds light about the importance of the study and its inherent limitations.

The Kurdish Context

While some studies such as the one by Felder and Brent (2005) recommend that all the advocated learning styles (Visual-Auditory-Kinesthetic (VAK) style, Kolb's learning styles and experiential learning model, Dunn and Dunn learning style) should be incorporated in the entire learning process, the situation among Kurdish English as a foreign language (EFL) learners is remarkably different. In northern Iraq, English language teaching is mainly conducted at the university level and in a small number of language teaching institutions. Hence, there are little to no preliminary English classes in which learners could be exposed to English language education earlier. On the other hand, the English language lessons at the university level that are conducted with the prime assumption that students have an elementary background in the English language, resulting in a contradiction. What EFL learning techniques used in university-level education is mostly composed of traditional methods in which deductive grammar teaching is employed. In other words, teachers teach grammar rules and followed by examples to illustrate. Little is being done to incorporate learning tools such as

the use of virtual learning tools, games, videos, whiteboards and so on. Regarding methodologies that address learning styles, the learning styles of visual, kinesthetic and auditory may be employed by a few teachers or institutions like the one this study took part in. Considering the fact that most university students in northern Iraq do not have a good background in the English language, learning styles used by EFL university students needs to be modified severely to meet the existing needs. This is particularly true considering the fact that studies have already shown that improper and ineffective use of various learning styles indeed adversely affects academic performance (Man & Tomoko, 2010; Rosadah, Noriah, & Zalizan, 2004). It is therefore essential to identify the learning style preferences of EFL university students in northern Iraq so as to be able to improve their academic performances.

Aim of the Study

The primary aim of this study is to reveal the most and least preferred learning styles amongst EFL Kurdish students studying at a public university in Iraq. The study also seeks to determine which strategies EFL Kurdish university learners employ the most and least when given a choice between visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning styles. In addition, this study also places focus on determining if there are any significant differences and/or similarities between the preferences of learning styles with respect to the gender variable.

In light of the aforementioned aims of the study, this study, therefore, seeks to provide answers to the following questions:

Regarding the learning styles of visual, auditory, and kinesthetics,

1. Which strategies do Kurdish English as foreign language university learners prefer the most and least?
2. Are there any significant differences and/or similarities between the preferences of learning styles with respect to the gender variable?

Statement of the Problem

The major problem is that administrators, parents, and teachers in northern Iraq always fail to pay attention to the differences in preferences of learning styles used by Kurdish EFL students (Vernez, Culbertson & Constant, 2015). This is affecting foreign language achievement among Kurdish EFL students. Consequently, it is presumed that foreign language achievement is correlated with learning styles used by Kurdish EFL students.

Another presumable problem is that Kurdish EFL teachers are not familiar with differences in individual preferences for language learning styles used in EFL classes. Yet students' preferences of learning styles differ from one student to the other (Almasa, Parilah & Fauziah, 2005; Felder & Spurlin, 2005; Rosadah, Noriah, & Zalizan, 2004). Man and Tomoko (2010) concurred with this idea and outlined that students' learning style preferences happen to differ from student to student and from class to class. Therefore, it is important to determine which of the auditory, visual, and kinesthetic learning styles EFL students at university level prefer the most. This is because failure to distinguish differences in student learning styles preferences hinders their academic performances (Rosniah, 2004).

Significance of the Study

As a result of the above-mentioned problems, this study seeks to examine the most and least preferred EFL learning styles among Kurdish EFL students so as to devise proper learning strategies to enhance EFL students' academic performance.

The study offers numerous benefits especially to Kurdish students studying EFL by enlightening their understanding about the existence, use and importance of the mentioned (VAK) learning styles. Teachers, on the other hand, can benefit from this study by allowing them to have a conscious approach by incorporating activities which recognize individual differences towards learning styles and preferences and thus, adjust their syllabuses accordingly. This will thereby help EFL teachers to use different instructional methods and materials which will reinforce the effectiveness of existing learning styles. Moreover, educational administrators can use this study as a platform upon which they can develop instructional materials, curriculum activities and courses that reinforce the effectiveness of students' learning styles.

Limitations of the Study

Even though there is more than one learning style, this study only concentrated on three learning styles, namely the visual, auditory and kinesthetic styles. These styles were focused on since the most commonly employed styles at the university level for English lessons in the region consist of the VAK model styles (Vernez et al., 2015). Since the study was performed by a single researcher within a limited time scope, the research was performed based on an examination of preferred learning styles amongst a public Kurdish university (Soran University

in Erbil, Iraq) and hence, the study should not be generalized to the whole population. For the same reasons, the scope only covers the VAK model styles and does not cover the Kolb's learning styles and experiential learning model, or the Dunn and Dunn learning style models, and doesn't include other learning styles like tactile, analytic, introverted, or extroverted styles.

Definition of Key Terms

Strategy: A strategy in this study is defined as a method or plan chosen to bring about a desired change in students' learning abilities.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter looks at theoretical insights that can be used to shed more light on the reason why students employ certain learning styles over others. Considering the fact that they are the most commonly utilized methods for English as a foreign language (EFL) in northern Iraq universities, and certain research limitations, the scope of this research only covers the Visual-Auditory-Kinesthetic (VAK) learning styles. This chapter also sheds light on what is learning, it offers a description of teaching and learning styles and reviews of related literature pertaining to learning styles. This is important as it helps to identify and fill in study gaps and offer a platform upon which discussions will be made.

Learning

Prabhat (2011) defined learning as a process through which one acquires new values, knowledge, and skills. The notable observation that can be made from this definition concerns the process aspect of the definition which can be said to be an ongoing thing. Felder and Brent (2005) agree with this idea and outline that learning is an ongoing process through which one acquires new values, knowledge, and skills. However, having noted that failure to acknowledge differences in preferences over learning have an adverse effect on learning, the learning process throughout this study will be referred to with a slight modification to the above expression, as “an ongoing process through which students acquire new values, knowledge, and skills using the preferred learning techniques”.

Meanwhile, it is important to note that people will continue to learn until they die and, in this case, considerations can be made that learning is a lifelong process. Such a process involves the transformation of knowledge and information into desired attitudes, behaviors and skills (Obralic & Akbarov, 2012). However, the notable thing is that learning commences from a person's inner self. This implies that any individual learner has his or her own preferred way of learning. That is, learners take in information and apply it in different ways that usually vary a lot from other learners. On the other hand, students have been noted to take time to discover the most effective way through which they learn, especially through trial and error methods (Obralic & Akbarov, 2012). In most cases, one's way of learning is determined by his or her physical and emotional setting, characteristics, and past experiences (Prabhat, 2011). Kolb (1984) also considered the way a person learns is by using his or her ears and eyes. This all takes a different magnitude and nature along with the fact students can prefer to work in groups or alone. All these aspects are an embodiment of what is called a 'learning style'.

Learning Styles

A description of how learners collect, separate, organize, store, deduce and make conclusions using the information for future use is what is known as learning styles (Chick, 2017). The existence of different learning styles implies that teachers must not only be aware of these learning styles but must also be in a position to use the most effective style at the right time. This also includes the ability to acknowledge and consider the students' different

Preferred Learning Styles (PLS). The major challenge is that a notable number of teachers are incapable of recognizing their students' PLS (Ahmad, 2009).

Types of Learning Styles

Certain learning styles that are commonly used have been described as the following by various researchers:

Visual. The visual learning style is more popular among EFL and second language (L2) learners and the learner, in this case, is assumed to prefer to learn by watching (Nematipour, 2012). The incorporation of videos, pictures, animations, and multimedia can help the visual learners to remember and recognize the words and meanings that they can use when using the L2.

Auditory. The auditory learning style is another common style of language learning. The EFL and English as second language (ESL) learners are more inclinedtoadapt audio learning techniques as observed. The auditory learning style includes recordings, multimedia, and audios that help the learners to memorize the L2 and help them recall the vocabulary when dealing in or with L2 (Ehrman, 1996).

Kinesthetic. These learning styles are based on the idea that individuals learn best by moving and touching (Abdul & Abdullah, 2000). That is, learners have two ways which they use to learn (tactile (touch) and kinesthetic (movement)). This type of style, therefore, implies that a certain degree of inefficiency takes place in learning styles when there is a lack of movement or stimulation. As such, this learning style implies that learners will take notes by

using color highlighters, attempting to focus on getting the big picture, examining the learning materials, and take notes just to move their hands.

Tactile. These are a form of kinesthetic learning styles and they are based on the use and importance of movement to facilitate learning (Rosniah, 2004). They often are used in conjunction with auditory and visual learning methods. Notable examples include making models, visuals (such as graphs), charts, timelines, concept maps, and writing.

Analytic. In this case, the learner is presumed to prefer to learn by using numbers, theories, and logic (Marashi & Dadari, 2012). The analytic learning style incorporates more of facts and figures with numbers to bring about logic for anything that is studied. This helps the English learners to be able to grasp an FL more quickly and more easily. The EFL learners in this way can remember the language for a longer time.

Extroverted. In an academic context, extroverts are considered to be learners who prefer to learn with other people and amongst colleagues (Marashi & Dadari, 2012). This type of group learning is also a good example of social learning styles. It is also considered that learners sitting in a group and discussing something are more likely to remember it than an individual studying in a room alone (Liu, Hu, & Gan, 2013). Learning through discussion is quite popular in modern societies and classrooms. In addition, learning through discussion is also helpful when dealing with huge and diverse English classrooms.

Introverted. This is a learning style that is in contrast to extrovert learning styles, and the learner is considered to prefer to learn alone (Ghaedi & Jam, 2014). That is, the solitary

learners prefer to learn alone and avoid group activities. This type of learning style may be an issue for English learners in huge classrooms and may impact their performance (Srijongjai, 2011).

Approaches to Learning Styles

There are basically three different types of models that can be used to describe students' preferences for learning styles and these are the visual, auditory and kinesthetic (VAK) learning styles model (Reid, 1985), Kolb's (1984) learning styles and experiential learning model, and the Dunn and Dunn (1978) learning model. These approaches are discussed in detail as follows:

Visual, Auditory and Kinesthetic (VAK). The VAK model is a group of learning styles that are composed of visual, auditory and kinesthetic learning styles and was developed based on ideas formulated by Reid (1987). Clark (2008) established that the VAK model is mainly applicable in situations that involve the determination of dominant learning styles. Subsequent studies were later developed based on the use of the VAK to assess its benefits and conditions under which it provides good explanations. For instance, a study by the University of Pennsylvania conducted in 2009 showed that the VAK is advantageous in terms of simplicity and works best in conditions characterized by increased learning. Further insights provided by Clark (2008) showed that learners are capable of using all the three learning styles to learn about new experiences and receive new information. This model implies that the most employed learning style is one which causes a learner to acquire the desired information by making effective deductions from the provided learning materials. However, the dominant style

might not be what learners are used to and work in similar situations. In other words, propositions made by Clark (2008) entail that learners can either chose a particular learning style over the other or possibly make combined use of both styles.

Another important aspect that can be noted to be exhibited by the VAK model is that the learning styles are applied differently and at different time intervals. Clark recommends that kinesthetic styles be used in the early stages of the learning process (Clark, 2008). This is followed by the use of visual aids to augment the learning process and then later the auditory styles. The different conditions under which the styles are applied also relate to age, which means kinesthetic styles are mainly used to deal with young learners. Visual styles are used as learners grow in age up to a level where they are old enough to be taught using auditory styles.

Visual-Auditory-Kinesthetic learning model, abbreviated usually as VAK, is a collection of learning styles and practices individuals can employ based on their own preferences when learning. It has long been established that different people have different preferences for learning, and studies in the last four decades have classified the most preferred and common learning methods. Reid (1987) has formulated a series of ideas that established what could arguably be called the modern classification of learning styles with the VAK model.

Visual: Some people are visually-dominant and can better absorb, digest, and retain information when it’s presented with visual elements, like diagrams, charts, graphs, etc.

Auditory: Auditory-dominant individuals react better in terms of learning capabilities when the information is presented in the audial form. Lectures, discussions, tapes, and even hearing their own voice when repeating the information help these kinds of people to learn better.

Kinesthetic: Certain individuals are kinesthetic-dominant, meaning that they learn and retain information better when they experience the information physically. Such people prefer the "hands-on" approach and learn better when they can use various learning tools they can touch, experiment, and tinker with.

Subsequent studies were later developed based on the use of the VAK to assess its benefits and to determine the conditions under which it provides good explanations. These studies have led to the conclusion that various stages of the learning process can benefit from different degrees from each of the learning methods, ie., individuals' preferences of the learning method can change over the course of time or based on various parameters like the subject, age, and gender of the learner, stress level, classroom population, and so on (Clark, 2008).

The VAK model was the basis for many other learning style models developed afterward, the most prominent of which is the visual-auditory-read/write-kinesthetic (VARK) model (Fleming, 1995).

Kolb's Learning Styles and Experiential Learning Model. This model is based on the work conducted by Professor David Kolb (1984) and focuses on the need to illustrate the essence of critical reflection in learning. Kolb (1984) believed that effective learning ought to constitute and follow four different stages which are:

I. Concrete experience which involves learners learning through correspondence and acquaintance as a form of practical experience.
II. Reflective observation through which learners learn from others by mere observation and use the observed information to deal with their own situations.
III. Abstract conceptualization which involves the use of theoretical ideas to offer explanations about particular learning situations.
IV. Active experimentation which involves the use of theories to deal with learning issues and make decisions thereof (Kolb, 1984).

The implications of Kolb's theory can be derived from a study done by Richmond and Cummings (2005) which established that students' enjoyment is important for facilitating learning. Their findings also showed that effective learning can be attained by focusing on behavioral learning, perceptual learning, symbolic learning, and effective learning environments. The findings further recommended that emphasis be placed on determining students PLS and the designing of academic curriculum based on these observations.

The Dunn and Dunn Learning Styles Model. This theoretical framework is based on the work by Dunn and Dunn whose main idea was to develop a more effective approach to teaching and learning (Dunn & Dunn, 1993). Their main focus was based on the argument that students learn in different ways and what is best for one student is not necessarily desirable for other students (Dunn et al., 1995). Dunn and Dunn's approach is centered on the prevalence of the following underlying assumptions:

- Learners' preferences can be satisfied by making adjustments to the instructional environment through the use of different instructional methods.
- Individual students' learning preferences can easily be identified.

The importance of Dunn and Dunn's approach can be observed to lie in its ability to offer insights about possible to strategies needed to enhance students learning abilities and performance (Dunn et al., 1995). As a result, Dunn and Dunn established the following important aspects as a way of approaching matters involving students learning abilities and performance:

- A lot of students have the ability to take advantage of the benefits obtained from their learning styles when dealing with difficult or new academic issues.
- A lot of teachers have the ability to use learning styles as a platform of enhancing the effectiveness of their instructional programs.
- Students can easily perform better when they have the right and adequate resources and are in a conducive learning environment.
- PLS are easy to identify and measure.
- All students have strength but their strength is in different areas.

- Instructional approaches, resources, and environments are more effective in situations involving the use of diversified learning styles.
- A lot of students can learn (Dunn et al., 1995).

The VAK model considers that there are different conditions under which learning styles are applied especially with regards to age. The VAK approach also recommends that visuals be used as learners grow in age up to a level where they are old enough to be taught using auditory styles. On the other hand, Kolb's theory posits that students' enjoyment is important for facilitating learning and that effective learning can be attained by focusing on behavioral, perceptual, symbolic and effective learning environments. Meanwhile, Dunn and Dunn believed that learners' preferences can be satisfied by making adjustments to the instructional environment through the use of different instructional methods. All these approaches have one thing in common. That is, they highlight that individual learners have different attributes and abilities. Hence, students will prefer certain learning styles over others. As a result, teachers ought to identify differences in students' PLS and design course materials according to the observed differences.

Related Studies

Studies on employed learning styles date back to the work that was conducted by Reid in (1987) which sought to examine the most preferred learning styles by 43 EFL learners in the United States of America. The results showed that the preferred learning styles (PLS) vary in accordance with one's nationality and as such showed that the use of visual aids was more preferable for Japanese students. The Japanese students were noted as not preferring auditory

learning styles. The PLS was further noted to vary between Chinese and Arabic speakers. The results further pointed out that kinesthetic learning styles were much more preferable and this had an effect on English teaching and learning programs. Conclusions were also made in relation to the students working in pairs and it was concluded that working in small groups and or pairs helped to facilitate students to learn.

Rosadah, Noriah, and Zalizan (2004) conducted a study that examined factors that affect students' PLS using data collected from 66 forms four students from Shah Alam. Observations made pointed out that curiosity and emotions had a huge effect on students PLS. The findings showed that students were much more inclined to learn faster and easier when they perceive the lesson to be easy.

Rosniah (2004) did a study that drew attention towards examining learning styles preferences among less proficient first semester Arts students at University Kebangsaan in Malaysia. The study was based on the need to examine why students favor certain learning styles as opposed to others. The findings revealed that the existence of multiple learning styles puts students in a position to choose learning styles which they consider as effective. The results further showed that tactile and kinesthetic learning styles were highly preferred among the students. The use of auditory and visual styles did not ease students learning challenges. That is, they were considered as difficult to use and copy with. The students were also observed to quickly copy with newly introduced learning styles. One notable observation that can explain some differences in PLS is the idea that students' information processing abilities and personality traits do not easily change. Which entails that such elements cause students to have no need of other leaning styles and have little challenges in using certain types of learning

styles. However, both the results and conclusions made expressed favor over the use of auditory and visual learning styles.

Almasa, Parilah, and Fauziah (2009) incorporated demographic elements to examine if they played a role in students' preferences of certain learning styles over others. The study population was composed of 160 students of Indian, Chinese and Malaysian origin. The results showed that there are significant differences in students PLS. Male students were observed to favor more the use of kinesthetic and auditory learning styles as opposed to male students. On the other hand, female students were noted to favor the learning styles that were associated with the use of subjective, field sensitive, more reflective and feeling centered learning styles. With regards to nationality, Malaysian students were observed to show a strong preference for kinesthetic styles. The use of tactile learning styles was considered to offer insignificant contributions towards improving the students' learning abilities and performance. Their findings also pointed out that these differences also impose effects on students' academic performance. Thus, conclusions were made that the students' PLS be identified and learning programs structured in a way that motivates students to learn effectively. This was also supported by observations made by insights given by Abdul and Abdullah (2000). Abdul and Abdullah considered that teachers who are in the position to identify students' PLS are more posed to deliver learning materials and teach effectively.

Melton (1990) analyzed learning style preferences of 331 Chinese English students and the study showed that there were no significant differences in the students' learning style preferences. The established reasons showed that factors such as year of study and exposure to

a foreign teacher have an effect on the way the English students learn. Hence, cases were students' learning style preferences do not differ are most likely to be associated with other factors influencing the way the students learn.

Alkooheji and Al-Hattami (2018) conducted a study that looked at learning style preferences among 135 Bahrain college students using the Visual-Auditory-Reading/Writing-Kinesthetics (VARK) model, which is a slightly modified version of the classical VAK model. The results showed that kinesthetic and visual learning styles were the most widely preferred learning styles. The results also showed that the students learning styles preferences vary according to the nature of academic learning activity done by the students. This, therefore, implies that the results of this study are more likely to differ from those conducted on students other than EFL students.

Zhu et al. (2018) did a study that used the VARK model to examine the most preferred learning styles among 199 undergraduate and graduate nursing students in China. The results of the study showed that the undergraduate students had a high preference of combined numerous learning styles as compared to the graduate students. The results also revealed that kinesthetic learning styles were the most preferred learning styles among both undergraduate and graduate nursing students. The results do, however, not show how the learning preferences differ by gender.

Wehrwein, Lujan, andDiCarlo (2007)analyzed the effects of gender differences in learning style preferences among 86 undergraduate physiology students using a VARK model. The study results showed that female students highly preferred kinesthetic learning styles followed by reading, auditory and visual styles respectively. On the other hand, male students

were discovered to highly prefer visual styles followed by auditory, reading and kinesthetic learning styles respectively. Hence, we can expect the results of this study to differ by gender.

Aragon, Johnson, and Shaik (2002) carried out an examination of the influence of learning style preferences on student success in online versus face-to-face environments. The study established that there were significant differences between learning style preferences among online and face-to-face learners. However, the results showed that the differences in learning environments had no significant effects on students' academic success. Expectations can thus be made that factors such as ambitions and career ambitions will have a huge influence on students' academic success rather than just employed learning styles.

Slater, Lujan, and DiCarlo (2007) conducted a study that examined if gender influences learning style preferences of 250 first-year medical students using the VARK approach. Though the study revealed that there were no significant differences in learning styles preferences between male and female students, both preferred multiple modes of information. This entails that a different combination of learning styles provides students with various and numerous information. As a result, students may not show a significant preference for any single learning style.

Farkokbakth and Nejadansari (2015) have investigated the effects of using synthetic multisensory phonics on EFL young learners' literacy learning, where they measured the effects of an experimental series of auditory/phonics practices using an experimental group (who received the education with phonics) and a control group (who did not receive any

phonics practices). The results of their study indicate that the experimental group had a better performance on the reading and spelling tests.

Regarding the influence of gender on learning preferences of EFL students, Natsir et al. (2016) have performed a study where they inspected the preferences of the participants (from the school of Banda Aceh, in Rukoh, Indonesia) through a questionnaire, distributed to 20 male and 20 female students. The questionnaire scored the answers using a Likert scale (1 to 4). Their analysis has revealed that male students have preferred the visual strategies over auditory and kinesthetic ones (with mean values of 3.08, 2.72, and 2.73, respectively), whereas the female students preferred auditory strategies (with mean values of 2.63, 3.12, and 2.80, respectively).

There were also some other studies regarding the influence of gender on learning style preferences for different branches. The study of Ibrahim and Hussein (2015) investigated the learning style preferences of nursing students (60 males and 150 females). The findings of the study report that, a great majority preferred kinesthetic learning methods, followed by auditory and visual ones. For the males, on the other hand, the preference for visual, auditory, and kinesthetic methods was more or less evenly distributed.

Sarabi-Asiabar et al. (2014), however, report a significant relationship between students' genders preferred learning styles for the first-year medical students in Iran. The researchers report that female student preferred using auditory learning methods more than male students, whereas male students employed the kinesthetic learning style more, compared to their female counterparts.

A literature survey study by Vaseghi et al. (2012) reports that, most studies investigating the gender factor for foreign language learners provided statistical evidence for differences in learning style preferences between male and female students, whereas only a handful of studies claimed that gender had no statistically significant difference in learning preferences of such students.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides an outline of the methodological procedures that were carried out in order to execute this study. This chapter also provides a framework through which the collected data was analyzed and discussed. It also established a platform upon which conclusions and recommendations were made. As such, this chapter dealt with the adopted population and sampling methods and data analysis procedures.

Research Design and Procedures

A quantitative approach was used to examine data collected from a sample of 100 undergraduate students. Quantitative research is an approach that involves the use of deductive logic to provide answers to a set of research questions or hypotheses that are formulated prior to testing and are affirmed soon after the data has been collected and analyzed (Amarutanga et al., 2002). A quantitative questionnaire was used to effectively answer the research questions of this study. A questionnaire is a research instrument that is used to collect information from respondents using a set of written questions for the purpose of addressing certain research topics of interests (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016). A hundred questionnaires were distributed to English as a foreign language (EFL) students studying at a public university in the city of Erbil, northern Iraq. It took about six minutes for each student to complete the questionnaire and all the questionnaires were successfully obtained back with no errors.

While there are numerous learning styles models employed in the teaching of various subjects, the most commonly used three models are Reid's (1987) perceptual learning styles of Visual-Auditory-Kinesthetic (VAK) model, Kolb's learning styles and experiential learning model, and the Dunn and Dunn learning styles model. However, this study placed emphasis upon the VAK model and this was after considering two important facts. The first consideration is that the study investigates the preferred learning styles for EFL learners in a public university in northern Iraq. Also, the most commonly employed styles at the university level for English lessons in the region consist of the VAK model styles (Vernez et al., 2015). The second consideration is based on technical limitations for the thesis which limit the scope of the research to the aforementioned location and study population. Still, it is plausible that there are differences between the university students in terms of their preferred sensory style (visual, auditory, or kinesthetic) when learning English. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the most and the least preferred learning styles, and to evaluate if the gender variable plays a significant factor for the tendencies of such preferences.

Participants and Sampling

A total of 100EFL undergraduate students studying at a public university in northern Iraq participated in this study. The sample size was determined using convenient sampling. Etikan, Musa and Alkassim (2016) defined convenient sampling as a non-probability sampling that draws a sample from a part of the population that is close to hand. Convenience sampling was used in this study because it allowed the researcher to obtain ideas about Kurdish EFL

students' learning styles preferences (Farrokhi & Mahmoudi, 2013). In addition, it avoids problems that emanate from using a randomized sample (Etikan, Musa &Alkassim, 2016).

Out of the 100 English language and literature (ELL) and English language teaching (ELT) students that took part in the study, 51.00% of the students were established to be male students while female students constituted 49.00%. This relatively implies that there are more male students studying ELL and ELT programs at the academic institution in question (see Table 1).

Table 1

Gender Profile

Variable	**Description**	**Responses**	**%**
Gender	Male	51	51.00
	Female	49	49.00
	Total	**100**	**100**

Data Collection

Data were collected using an adapted version of a Learning Style Survey Questionnaire (LSSQ) (see Appendix B). The LSSQ was developed by O'Brien (1985) and it is widely used by a number of studies (see Appendix A). The adoption of this modified LSSQ thus established a common group upon which findings from this study were compared with other related studies (Allison & Hayes, 1990; Fung & Ho, 1993; Honey & Mumford, 2000). However, changes were made to the LSSQ so that it confines to both the scope and objectives of the study.

While the original LSSQ was composed of two sections under which the first section focused on the demographic aspects of the participants and the second part was the questionnaire, the only demographic variable investigated in this study is the gender of the participants. Considering this, section 1 was related to the gender variable followed by section 2 which concentrated on strategies related to the learning styles of visual, auditory, and kinesthetic, respectively). Section 2 was blinded and the learners did not know which learning style (strategies: the items they were selecting) they belonged to. Respectively the strategies-items 1-9 were related to the visual learning style, 10-16 the auditory learning style and 17-22 the kinesthetic learning style. Section 2 used a 6-point Likert Scale with values ranging from 1 to 6 to evaluate whether the student employed the particular learning strategy and to investigate various sub-queries which involved various questions regarding the evaluated learning style. Each number from 1 to 6 corresponds to values of never, hardly ever, rarely, sometimes, very often, and always, respectively in increasing order. The participants were asked to circle their preference according to these variations.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process involved the use of Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23. Mean scores and standard deviation were used to ascertain the effects of the variable elements together with their responsiveness. In other words, the preferences of the participants of this study according to the learning styles of visual, auditory and kinaesthetic were revealed. To be able to reveal which learning style was preferred the most and least

ANOVA was employed. In addition, an independent sample t-test was used to determine if any differences existed in the use of visual, auditory and kinesthetic learning styles between male and female Kurdish EFL students.

Ethical Approval

The effort was taken to ensure that all the ethical standards were strictly upheld and this included measures to ensure that the collected findings remained confidential by all means. Such measures ensured that the findings were not to be made public without the consent of the respondents. This was done so as to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants. Prior to that, all the participants were informed of the purpose of the study and this was in line with propositions made by Sales (2000) to adhere to the ethical research principles. This was done so as to specifically avoid deceptive practices. Oral consent was also received from the participants before distributing the questionnaires.

The researcher applied for ethical approval to undertake the study using the developed VAK standard learning styles questionnaire, which was a modified version of the classical LSSQ designed by O'Brian. It is after receiving ethical approval from the ethical committee as required by Near East University that the researcher proceeded to carry out the study (see Appendix C). In addition, ethical approval was applied for and granted by the public university in Erbil, northern Iraq (see Appendix D).

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings obtained in the study are based on 100 responses collected from English as a foreign language (EFL) students majoring in the departments of English language teaching (ELT), and English language and literature (ELL) at a public university in northern Iraq. The data were analyzed using a combination of mean scores and standard deviation. This chapter presents the findings and discussion of the research.

To be able to reveal the first research question which sought to find out the most and least commonly preferred learning style among the Kurdish EFL participants a questionnaire was distributed to the participants. The ANOVA results revealed that the most commonly preferred learning style was visual, while the least preferred was kinaesthetic style (see Table 2). As it can be seen in Table 2, the visual learning style (with a mean score of 3.43) was the most preferred learning style amongst the Kurdish EFL learners, while the auditory learning style (with a mean score of 2.88) was preferred the second, and the kinesthetic learning style (with a mean score of 1.23)was preferred the least.

Table 2

Learning Style Preference

PLS	M	SD
Visual	3.43	0.05
Auditory	2.88	0.06
Kinesthetic	1.23	0.04

Key: M: Mean Score SD: Standard Deviation

To be able to determine which strategy among and within the three learning styles (visual, auditory, kinesthetic) the Kurdish EFL learners employ the most and least mean scores and standard deviations of each item presented in the questionnaire were calculated. The results are as follows:

Visual Learning Style

The variable visual style sought to determine the students' perceptions about learning by watching using videos, pictures, animations, and multimedia. The variable was composed of nine sub-variable items through which the students were asked to rate their opinions on a scale rating from 1 to 6, each number corresponding to the values of never, hardly ever, rarely, sometimes, very often, and always, respectively in increasing order.

When the participants were asked to indicate whether they remembered something better when they wrote it down, they responded with a mean score of 3.34 and a standard deviation of 0.75 (Table 3). This appeared to be preferred the most among the visual learning style by the participants of this study. This shows us that the participants prefer visual tasks.

This finding is in line with the findings of Nematipour (2012) which showed that visual learning styles help students to learn better when they are encouraged to write things down. This is also similar to the results obtained when they were asked if "they preferred to work in quiet places", where the participants appeared to have significantly preferred this type of learning strategy, as evidenced by the mean score of 3.34 and standard deviation of 1.34. These findings bear resemblance to the findings revealed by Nematipour (2012) that watching or observing are the key aspects of visual learning styles and students who prefer visual learning strategies tend to shy away from the noise and work in silence, contrary to those who prefer the auditory style.

Table 3

Visual Learning Strategies

Item	**Strategy**	**M**	**SD**
1	I remember something better if I write it down.	3.34	0.75
7	I prefer to work in quiet places.	3.34	1.34
2	I have to look at people to understand what they say.	3.21	0.85
4	I use flashcards to help me remember the material for tests.	3.12	0.44
6	I have difficulties in understanding when other students are talking.	3.11	0.65
5	I can visualize the textbook page and where the answer is located.	3.09	1.03
3	When I listen, I visualize pictures, numbers, or words in my head.	3.06	1.20
8	I prefer to learn with TV or video rather than other media.	3.02	0.24
9	I use color-coding to help me as I learn or work.	2.58	0.86

Key: M: Mean Score SD: Standard Deviation

It also appears that the participants on average felt the need to look at someone to better understand what they had been saying (item 2), as can be seen from the mean score of 3.21 and standard deviation of 0.85 obtained for the related strategy (see Table 3). This finding is in line with the findings of Abdul and Abdullah (2000), and further cements the idea that watching or observing is a key aspect of visual learning styles.

A similar result was obtained for the strategy regarding the need felt by the participants for flashcards to help remember information, with a mean score of 3.12 and a standard deviation of 0.44. This result is in line with the findings of Astuti (2015), who reports that flashcards help improve the interest of the students towards various subjects when learning a new language and thereby significantly improve the academic performances.

Furthermore, the students on average were found to have trouble understanding the subject when others talked (M:3.11, SD: 0.65), and were found to learn better when they visualized pictures, numbers or words in their heads when listening (mean 3.09, standard deviation 1.03).Both of these findings are as expected, and is in concordance with the findings of the study of Oxford (2003), where she states that those with the sensory preference of visual learning tend to have trouble with learning from lectures and discussion environments and try to change the words into images in their minds to compensate. Interestingly, the preference to use a TV or video instead of other learning mediums, while still high with a mean score of 3.02 and standard deviation of 0.24, was still relatively lower down the list (see Table 2). This is in concordance with the general consensus on the use of TV in learning literature, where success is reported to be dependent on how well the program integrates with the curriculum, teachers'

roles, other learning materials, activities, the viewing context, assessment practices, and the broadcasting schedule (Moeller, 1996).

The lowest score for the visual learning style preference questions was in response to the question regarding whether the use of color-coding to helped the student learn or work (M:2.58, SD:0.86). Perhaps color-coding the learning or study materials are believed by the participants to require too much effort for a relatively little gain, or the concept of color is believed to further less effect compared to shapes associated with the learning material, and the location of the information.

These results show us that the most preferred strategy among the visual learning style was “writing the things down”, and the least preferred strategy was “using color-codes to help with the learning or study”. Regarding the effectiveness of writing things down, and whether students who prefer visual learning strategies take this approach, majority of the literature seems to be in agreement, as Almasa et al. (2005)report as part of their literature survey that writing things down has been an established, and a tried and tested, method for visual style learners. Regarding the use of color-coding the information however, conflicting opinions have been voiced. Where certain researchers believe color-coding greatly improves the potential of remembering important sections of information and makes learning more interesting (Lambersky & Dwyer, 1983) some researchers remark that it is only effective when students find out not just what or how to color-code the information, but also why (Mack, 2013).

Auditory Learning Style

The variable auditory style provided an indication of how the Kurdish EFL students learn by using adapt audio learning techniques such as recordings, multimedia, and audios. This variable was composed of 7 variable elements and the same Likert scale of 1 to 6 was used to rate the EFL students' opinions as to whether they enjoyed using these methods or not.

Table 4

Auditory Learning Strategies

Item	Strategy	M	SD
16	I like to learn about new things by hearing from the teacher rather than learning through a textbook or lecture.	3.86	0.98
10	I easily remember things that I hear	3.51	0.56
14	I easily understand things when I hear them from the teacher rather than me having to read about them	3.50	1.48
12	I have problems reading poor copies with very small prints.	3.42	1.22
13	I have problems reading other people's handwriting.	3.08	1.37
11	I enjoy using my fingers as pointers when reading to keep my place.	3.04	1.60
15	I do not like writing that much because it makes me feel tired	3.28	1.27

Key: M: Mean Score SD: Standard Deviation

When the participants were asked to indicate whether they like to learn about new things by hearing from the teacher rather than learning through a textbook or lecture, the participants (with a mean score of 3.86 and standard deviation of 0.98) appeared to have employed this strategy (Table 4). This shows us that the participants made use of auditory learning styles. This finding is in agreement with propositions made by Abdul and Abdullah

(2000) which highlighted that hearing is one of the most preferred types of auditory learning styles.

When the participants were asked to indicate whether they remembered something better if they hear it, the participants (with a mean score of 3.51 and a standard deviation of 0.56) seemed mostly to agree with the proposition. This finding is also supported by observations made by Almasa, Parilah, and Fauziah (2009) which considered hearing to form a critical aspect of auditory learning styles. A similar result is also true for the question regarding if the participants easily understood things when they heard them from the teacher rather than them having to read about them, as the participants (with a mean score of 3.50 and standard deviation of 1.48) appeared to agree on the proposition as well.

Meanwhile, the results are also in agreement with findings established by Rosniah (2004) with regards to the questions that were asked that participants as to whether had problems reading poor copies with very small prints. For this question, the participants (with a mean score of 3.42 and a standard deviation of 1.22) seemed to have been experiencing problems with small prints. This is also related to ideas which sought to establish as to whether the participants had problems reading other people's handwriting, as the participants responded to the relevant question with a mean score of 3.08 and standard deviation of 1.37. This also extends to include ideas established when the participants were asked if they enjoyed using fingers as pointers when reading, where the participants responded to the question with a mean score of 3.04 and standard deviation of 1.60. This indicates to a certain degree of difficulty in reading, or at least, a certain amount of focus is maintained to keep the place of reading. All

these established findings do concur with similar findings established by Rosadah, Noriah and Zalizan (2004) which contended that all aspects of auditory learning styles are more likely to be used to help EFL learners to memorize the L2 and recall the required vocabulary when dealing with EFL situations, particularly when compared to reading situations.

These results clearly show that the most preferred strategy among the students who employed the auditory learning strategies was “learning new things by hearing them from the teacher”, rather than reading them from textbooks, while the least preferred strategy was “writing things down” as it made them feel tired. It is understandable that listening to the teacher has been the favourite learning strategy preferred by the participants who benefit the most from auditory strategies, as it can be argued to be the foundational relationship between the student and the teacher. As Brown (2001) puts it, the act of listening to a vocal instructor has long been established as one of the basic principles in teaching, and even teacher read-aloud materials are prepared and practiced by the teachers before the class. The researcher also argues thatthe effectiveness of any listening experience is enhanced when teachers assist students with learning activities that provide a framework for attending and focusing. All of these are in-line with the findings of our study. Meanwhile, Yulianti (2018) establishes that writing is a metacognitive act, whereas auditory representations are cognitive acts, and students who have trouble keeping up with the writing emotionally tend to listen to the music as they write to make the transition between the two different types of acts. The cognitive/metacognitive natures of listening/writing could be the cause of why auditory students do not enjoy writing things down.

Kinesthetic Learning Style

The variable of kinesthetic style offered ideas about how the Kurdish EFL students learn best by moving and touching, and the inquiry related to this type of learning was composed of 6 variable elements. As with the other styles, a 6-point Likert scale was also used to rate the opinions of the EFL students to determine whether they enjoyed kinaesthetic learning styles or not.

When the participants were asked to indicate whether they had a lot of challenges in giving verbal explanations, the participants responded to the question with a mean score of 3.92 and a standard deviation of 0.64 and appeared to be having difficulties with verbal communication in their learning practices. This finding is in line with the study conducted by Rosniah (2004) on students PLS using the VAK approach. The findings showed that students are more likely to use kinesthetic learning styles because they help to attack problem physically. In addition, the use of auditory learning styles was possibly attributed to it helping students to remember best what was done during the EFL class. These results are also to the findings obtained when the participants were asked as to whether learned fast when they are shown how to do things, the participants (with a mean score of 3.10 and standard deviation of 0.77) appeared to have preferred this aspect of kinesthetic learning styles. This is also similar to what was established by Rosniah (2004) and the reasons point out to kinesthetic learning styles helping students to learn by performing and by direct involvement.

Table 5

Kinesthetic Learning Strategies

Item	Strategy	M	SD
21	I have a lot of challenge in giving verbal explanations	3.92	0.64
18	I learn fast when being shown how to do things.	3.10	0.77
20	It is usually helpful for me to see one do it first before I do it.	2.89	1.41
22	I think much better when being allowed to move around the classroom.	2.84	1.05
17	I like to start doing things before I read the instructions	2.45	1.88
19	I tend to deal with problems in a much better way when I use a trial and error rather than a step-by-step method.	2.16	1.49

Key: M: Mean Score SD: Standard Deviation

Meanwhile, the results established by this study showed contrasting ideas with respect to ideas obtained when the participants were asked as to whether they liked to start doing things before they read the instructions. The participants responded to the relevant question with a mean score of 2.45 and a standard deviation of 1.88, appearing to be choosing the relatively safe and sound approach in learning. This also extends to include ideas obtained when the participants were asked as to whether it was usually helpful for them to see one do it first before they did it and if they thought much better when they were allowed to move around the classroom, where the participants responded with a mean score of 2.89 and standard deviation of 1.41. The participants on average also didn't seem to feel the need to move around

the classroom, as they responded to the relevant question with a mean score of 2.84 and a standard deviation of 1.85. This is particularly interesting as moving around is one of the significant aspects of kinaesthetic learning styles, and the results are somewhat dissimilar to the findings established by Rosniah (2004) on students' preferred learning styles. The possible reasons could be that kinesthetic learning styles were associated with problems such as distractions, reduction in effectiveness due to a decline in space, and to students who found reasons to fidget or move around the classroom for no good reason. The same applies to insights obtained when the participants were asked as to whether they dealt with problems in a much better way when they used a trial and error approach rather than a step-by-step method. The participants responded to this question with a mean score of 2.16 and a standard deviation of 1.49, appearing to not prefer a hands-on approach, but instead preferring guidance through other learning styles rather than kinesthetic.

Results regarding the students' kinaesthetic preferences show that they preferred the kinaesthetic learning style strategy mostly due to "having a lot of challenge giving verbal explanations", whereas "using a trial-and-error method" was the least liked aspect and they felt better with step-by-step methods. This finding is in conflict with the findings of Ibrahim and Hussein (2015), who reported that the kinaesthetic style was the second-most preferred method for both genders when learning a new language.

Gender and Learning Styles

To be able to reveal the second research question which sought to find out whether gender has an impact on the preferences of the EFL Kurdish learners, an independent samples t-test was employed for each learning style (see Tables 8, 9 and 10).

Visual

Independent t-tests were further used to determine if the Kurdish EFL learners' preferences differ based on gender. The results revealed that the Kurdish EFL learners' preferences for visual learning styles significantly differ based on gender at 5% (see Table 2). That is, more male EFL students were found to have a relatively higher preference for visual style as compared to female EFL students. The results are in contrast to the findings made by Karb et al. (2013) but in agreement with findings established by Alkooheji and Al-Hattami (2018) which showed that a high number of female students highly preferred visual learning style as compared to male students. Such differences can be attributed to differences in the area of focus of the studies. This is because the study by Karb et al. (2013) focused on medical students while this study concentrated on EFL students. Such differences can cause certain learning styles to be more effective and hence highly preferable than the others, especially between male and female students.

Table 6

Gender Preferences for Visual Learning Style

Variable	Gender	M	SD	Sig
Visual	Male	3.75	0.81	0.05
	Female	3.41	0.92	

With regards to the auditory learning style, it was noted that a relatively high proportion of the male EFL students preferred auditory learning style as compared to female EFL students. These differences in preferences were insignificantly different between male EFL students and female EFL students. These results are also in agreement with the findings made by Wehrwein, Lujan, and DiCarlo (2007). Possible reasons suggest that this can be attributed to differences in academic programs such as EFL which require relatively high use of auditory learning style as was shown as part of this study,of which, the use of auditory learning style has in most cases been noted to vary between individuals (Rosniah, 2004).

Table 7

Gender Preferences for Auditory Learning Style

Variable	Gender	M	SD	Sig
Auditory	Male	2.48	0.57	0.06
	Female	2.26	0.58	

The established data also further showed that there is a significant difference in the preferences of Kurdish EFL students for the kinesthetic learning style at 5%. A relatively higher number of male EFL students highly preferred to use kinesthetic learning style as opposed to female EFL students as shown in Table 10. The results are similar to those established by Karb et al. (2013) and Alkooheji and Al-Hattami (2018).

Table 8

Gender Preferences for Kinesthetic Learning Style

Variable	**Gender**	**M**	**SD**	**Sig**
Kinesthetic	Male	3.76	0.81	0.04
	Female	3.39	0.97	

Based on inferences that were from what is defined as learning in this study, it can be considered that learning is a continuous process through which students acquire new values, knowledge, and skills using the preferred learning styles. However, differences in preferred learning styles can be said to exist because of individual inner abilities and or inner self. As such, some students will excel at learning by making a limited use and or absolutely no use of certain learning styles. This not only creates differences in preferred learning styles (PLS) but also places a huge demand on teachers to identify such differences and effectively restructure their teaching programs.

Differences in students' PLS have an important implication on the students themselves as well. This is because individual students must be in a position to identify learning styles which they prefer most and work towards improving their learning activities by working on

maximizing and improving these styles respectively. Failure to do so can compromise students' ability to learn as well as their academic performance.

The results also revealed that gender had significant effects on the visual style used by Kurdish EFL students and this concurs with findings established by Alkooheji and Al-Hattami (2018). This is most probably due to the fact that the use of visual styles offers various ways of presenting a high volume of academic content (interactive, images, audio, video and text aspects). Thus, it effectively caters for the different learning styles of the students. Moreover, learning styles preferences of the students can also vary between male and female students because of differences in intellectual abilities of the students. This can also be attributed to the benefits students enjoy from making observations during classroom demonstrations. Rosniah (2004) posits that the use of visual learning styles causes an improvement in the students' ability to spell and read. Students can easily recognize words by seeing them and this encourages them to concentrate intensively. The benefits of using visual learning styles also include improvements in memory as the students will be in a position to remember a lot of things.

The results of this study also showed that gender had no significant effects on the use of auditory style. This is relatively true with regards to tertiary institutions in which the use of auditory learning styles is highly prevalent (Alkooheji & Al-Hattami, 2018; Slater, Lujan & DiCarlo, 2007; Wehrwein, Lujan & DiCarlo, 2007; Zhu et al., 2018). As a result, the use of auditory style can be deemed to be a common feature. Hence, students will be relatively

accustomed to the use of auditory style. Thus, the effects of gender on the use of auditory style may be considered to be insignificant.

The effects of gender on the use of kinesthetic style by Kurdish EFL students were noted to be significant. This can be attributed to the idea that differences in academic activities and learning programs have an influence on the way students learn (Karb et al., 2013). For example, the findings of this study are based on the examination of Kurdish EFL students. On the other hand, the study by Karb et al. (2013) focuses on pharmacy students. As a result, differences in educational programs studied by the students demand different approaches to learning. This causes academic teachers in the respective fields to use different approaches which students are more likely to prefer differently.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The students' preferred learning style (PLS) has always been a concern regarding the determination of the most effective learning/teaching style for a given course. This study was performed with regards to such a challenge and investigated the most and the least preferred learning styles by English as Foreign Language (EFL) learners in a public university, in the northern region of Iraq. Based on the literature estimations in northern Iraq, three distinctive learning styles Visual-Auditory-Kinesthetic (VAK) are concentrated on in English teaching methodologies (Vernez et al., 2015), for this reason only these learning styles were focused on in this study. After having revealed the most and least preferred learning style, the study further inquired if the gender of the learners had any influence on this preference.

Conclusions

The results indicate that students preferred the visual style the most, while they preferred the kinesthetic style the least (with mean values of 3.43 and 1.23 respectively) (Table 2). On the other hand, gender was found to have significant effects on visual and kinesthetic learning styles used by Kurdish EFL students. For the studied population, male students were found to have a higher disposition towards visual learning strategies compared to females (with mean values of 3.75 and 3.41, respectively) with statistically significant margin ($p<0.05$).The same also applies for kinesthetic methods, where the male students preferred this type of

learning methods more, compared to females (with mean values of 3.76 and 3.39 respectively, $p<0.05$). Male students also had a higher tendency to utilize auditory methods compared to females (with mean values of 2.48 and 2.26), but the difference was statistically insignificant ($p>0.05$).

Based on the scores they provided for the relevant questions, it can be seen that male students preferred all learning styles of the VAK model (visual, auditory, and kinesthetic methods), compared to females, who seem to prefer non-VAK models, or have more evenly distributed learning method preferences.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made in light of the above-established conclusions:

Teachers must focus on maximizing the use of visual and auditory learning styles by exposing students to a lot of classroom demonstrations, encouraging students to observe during classroom activities, giving students a lot of descriptions and verbal instructions, encouraging the use of a phonics approach, dialogue and plays.

Teachers should also focus on enhancing the use and effectiveness of kinesthetic learning styles by encouraging students to learn by doing, get directly involved in the learning process, focus on improving their spellings, make sure that the classroom space is enough to accommodate all the students and use a lot of stories to convey academic knowledge and/or information. This also includes encouraging students to come up with learning activities that encourage or stimulate the students to use more of their physical senses by encouraging

students (i) to write things down, (ii) start doing things rather than checking the directions first and (iii) take detailed notes during lectures.

Teachers should also introduce learning styles that improve the students' ability to deal with multiple inputs by allowing and encouraging them to separate out the relevant and important information in a given context even when distracting information is present, making them feel that focusing on grammar is less important than paying attention to the content of the message and use lengthy sentences in a target language when distracted without neglecting aspects of grammar and style.

Students, on the other hand, are encouraged to discuss learning tasks, engage in discussions with other students so as to expose themselves to new and improved ways of learning which will allow them to learn more EFL information.

Institutions and teachers, in particular, should change their methodologies to incorporate all the learning styles to achieve maximum learning of the target language.

Implications for Further Studies

While this study obtained valuable data and drew out significant results, it was limited in terms of the subject for the learning activity (English as Foreign Language), age group (university ages), education level (university students), location (northern Iraq) and the number of universities evaluated (only one university). To determine if the results hold true for other kinds of subject material, age or education groups, or other geographical locations could

provide valuable insight into the underlying causes of the student preferred learning style (PFL) phenomena.

Furthermore, the study was also limited in terms of scope as it did not compare the VAK method with other established methods like Kolb's learning styles and experiential learning model, and the Dunn and Dunn learning style models. This was a relatively safe limitation considering the existing information that VAK styles are the most commonly employed learning styles for the study population. Still, it would be of great value to determine if other learning style models have any potential for the subject. In addition, the other learning styles (tactile, analytic, introverted, extroverted) could also be incorporated and thereby investigated in another study.

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APPENCICES

APPENDIX A

Learning Styles Survey Questionnaire

Dear participant,

1. The aim of this questionnaire is to collect data from Kurdish EFL students regarding their preferred learning styles when learning the English language. Your participation in this research is vital for the exploration of the most and least preferred learning styles of Kurdish English as a foreign language learners, and it will help instructors and teachers to comprehend your requirements and conquer any difficulties and challenges you may have with the English language. Kindly read the instructions for each part carefully and give your views. The data gathered in this questionnaire are used for research purposes only and will be fully confidential.
2. In any part of the questionnaire, you are entitled to abandon to participate in this research. If you decide to opt out from the questionnaire your views and response will be deleted accordingly. If you require further information on this study, please do not hesitate to contact us on the information provided below.
3. Note/ Visual-Auditory-Kinesthetic (VAK) is a definition for a learning style model that classifies learning preferences of individuals based on visual, auditory, and kinesthetic inputs.

MA Student Researcher
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SECTION 1: Demographic Information

Gender: Male ☐ Female ☐

SECTION 2: In this section, we would like you to tell us to what extent do you consider to use the mentioned items. Note that there is no right or wrong answer, just try to select your answer as accurately as possible. Kindly do not forget any of the items and select just a single response for every item that reflects your preference towards learning the English language. Mark your answer by indicating the number that suits you O. **1= Never, 2= Hardly Ever, 3= Rarely, 4= Sometimes, 5= Very Often, 6= Always.**

1. I remember something better if I write it down. 1 2 3 4 5 6
2. I have to look at people to understand what they say. 1 2 3 4 5 6
3. When I listen, I visualize pictures, numbers, or words in my head. 1 2 3 4 5 6
4. I use flashcards to help me remember material for tests. 1 2 3 4 5 6
5. I can visualize the textbook page and where the answer is located. 1 2 3 4 5 6
6. I have difficulties in understanding when other students are talking. 1 2 3 4 5 6
7. I prefer to work in quiet places. 1 2 3 4 5 6
8. I prefer to learn with TV or video rather than other media. 1 2 3 4 5 6
9. I use color-coding to help me as I learn or work. 1 2 3 4 5 6
10. I easily remember things that I hear. 1 2 3 4 5 6
11. I enjoy using my fingers as pointers when reading to keep my place. 1 2 3 4 5 6
12. I have problems reading poor copies with very small prints. 1 2 3 4 5 6
13. I have problems reading other people's handwriting. 1 2 3 4 5 6
14. I easily understand things when I hear them from the teacher rather than me having to read about them 1 2 3 4 5 6
15. I do not like writing that much because it makes me feel tired 1 2 3 4 5 6

16. I like to learn about new things by hearing from the teacher rather than learning through a textbook or lecture. 1 2 3 4 5 6

17. I like to start doing things before I read the instructions. 1 2 3 4 5 6

18. I learn fast when I am shown how to do things. 1 2 3 4 5 6

19. I tend to deal with problems in a much better way when I use a trial and error rather than a step-by-step method. 1 2 3 4 5 6

20. It is usually helpful for me to see one do it first before I do it. 1 2 3 4 5 6

21. I have a lot of challenge in giving verbal explanations 1 2 3 4 5 6

22. I think much better when I am allowed to move around the classroom. 1 2 3 4 5 6

THANK YOU

APPENDIX B

O'Brien's Learning Style Questionnaire

The modality (learning channel preference) questionnaire reproduced here is by O'Brien (1985). To complete, read each sentence carefully and consider if it applies to you. On the line in front of each statement, indicate how often the sentence applies to you, according to the chart below. Please respond to all questions.

1	2	3
Never applies to me.	Sometimes applies to me.	Often applies to me.

SECTION ONE:

1. _____I enjoy doodling and even my notes have lots of pictures and arrows in them.
2. _____I remember something better if I write it down.
3. _____I get lost or am late if someone tells me how to get to a new place, and I don't write down the directions.
4. _____When trying to remember someone's telephone number, or something new like that, it helps me to get a picture of it in my mind.
5. _____If I am taking a test, I can "see" the textbook page and where the answer is located.
6. _____It helps me to look at the person while listening; it keeps me focused.
7. _____Using flashcards helps me to retain material for tests.
8. _____It's hard for me to understand what a person is saying when there are people talking or music playing.
9. _____It's hard for me to understand a joke when someone tells me.
10. _____It is better for me to get work done in a quiet place.

***Total*_____**

SECTION TWO:

1. _____ My written work doesn't look neat to me. My papers have crossed-out words and erasures.
2. _____ It helps to use my finger as a pointer when reading to keep my place.
3. _____ Papers with very small print, blotchy dittos or poor copies are tough on me.
4. _____ I understand how to do something if someone tells me, rather than having to read the same thing to myself.
5. _____ I remember things that I hear, rather than things that I see or read.
6. _____ Writing is tiring. I press down too hard with my pen or pencil.
7. _____ My eyes get tired fast, even though the eye doctor says that my eyes are ok.
8. ___ __ When I read, I mix up words that look alike, such as "them" and "then," "bad" and "dad."
9. _____ It's hard for me to read other people's handwriting.
10. _____ If I had the choice to learn new information through a lecture or textbook, I would choose to hear it rather than read it.

***Total*_____**

Continue with Section Three on the reverse side

SECTION THREE:

1. _____ I don't like to read directions; I'd rather just start doing.
2. _____ I learn best when I am shown how to do something, and I have the opportunity to do it.
3. _____ Studying at a desk is not for me.
4. _____ I tend to solve problems through a more trial-and-error approach, rather than from a step-by-step method.
5. _____ Before I follow directions, it helps me to see someone else do it first.

6. _____ I find myself needing frequent breaks while studying.
7. _____ I am not skilled in giving verbal explanations or directions.
8. _____ I do not become easily lost, even in strange surroundings.
9. _____ I think better when I have the freedom to move around.
10. _____ When I can't think of a specific word, I'll use my hands a lot and call something a "what-cha-ma-call-it" or a "thing-a-ma-jig."

Total_____

SCORING:

Now, add up the scores for each of the three sections and record below. The maximum score in any section is 30 and the minimum score is 10. Note the preference next to each section.

Section One score: _____(Visual)

Section Two score: _____(Auditory)

Section Three score: _____(Kinesthetic)

EVALUATING THE LEARNING STYLE QUESTIONNAIRE

The modality type with the highest score indicates your preferred learning channel. The higher the score, the stronger the preference. If you have relatively high scores in two or more sections, you probably have more than one strength. If the scores in the sections are roughly equal, you probably do not have a preferred learning channel; you are a multi-sensory learner.

The following table summarizes the observable characteristic indicative of the three learning styles. It provides an informal means of assessing your preferred approach to learning.

MODALITY	**VISUAL**	**AUDISTORY**	**KINESTHETIC** **(Hands-on)**
PREFERRED LEARNING STYLE	Learns by seeing or watching demonstrations	Learns through verbal instructions from self or others.	Learns by doing and direct involvement.
SPELLING	Recognizes words by sight; relies on configurations of words.	Uses a phonics approach has auditory word attack skills.	Often is a poor speller; writes words to determine if they "feel" right.
READING	Likes description; sometimes stops reading to stare into space and imagine scene; intense concentration.	Enjoys dialogue and plays; avoids lengthy descriptions; unaware of illustrations; moves lips or subvocalizes.	Prefers stories where action occurs early; fidgets while reading; not an avid reader.
HANDWRITING	Tends to be a good, particularly when young; spacing and	Has more difficulty learning in initial stages; tends to write	Good initially, but deteriorates when space becomes
	size are good; appearance is important.	lightly.	smaller; pushes harder on writing instrument.
MEMORY	Remember faces, but forgets names; writes things down; takes notes.	Remembers names, but forgets faces; remembers by auditory repetition.	Remembers best what was done, but not what was seen or talked about.
IMAGERY	Vivid imagination; thinks in pictures; visualizes in detail.	Sub-vocalizes; imagines things in sounds; details are less important.	Imagery not important; images that do occur are accompanied by movement.

DISTRACTABILITY	Unaware of sounds; distracted by movement.	Easily distracted by sounds.	Not attentive to visual or auditory presentation so may seem distracted.
PROBLEM SOLVING	Deliberate; plans in advance; organizes thoughts by writing them; lists problems.	Talks problems out; tries solutions verbally or subvocally; talks self through problems.	Attacks problem physically; impulsive; often selects solution involving greatest activity.
RESPONSE TO PERIODS OF INACTIVITY	Stares or doodles; finds something.	Hums, talks to self, or talks to others.	Fidgets or finds reasons to move.
RESPONSE TO NEW SITUATIONS	Looks around or examines structure.	Talks about situation; discusses pros and cons of what to do.	Tries things out; touches, feels or manipulates.

APPENDIX C

Ethical Approval Form

YAKIN DOĞU ÜNİVERSİTESİ

BİLİMSEL ARAŞTIRMALAR ETİK KURULU

1.11.2018

Dear Rezheen Nabee Ahmed

Your application titled **"Analysis of Preferred Learning Styles Among English as a Foreign Language Learners"** with thes application number YDÜ/EB/2018/178 has been evaluated by the Scientific Research Ethics Committee and granted approval. You can start your research on the condition that you will abide by the information provided in your application form.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Direnç Kanol

Rapporteur of the Scientific Research Ethics Committee

Direnc Kanol

Note: If you need to provide an official letter to an institution with the signature of the Head of NEU Scientific Research Ethics Committee, please apply to the secretariat of the ethics committee by showing this document.

APPENDIX D

Research Approval Form

Kurdistan Regional Government – Iraq
Council of Ministers
Ministry of Higher Education & Scientific Research
Presidency of Soran University
Directorate of Academic Relations

هەرێمی کوردستان- عیراق
سەرۆکایەتیی ئەنجوومەنی وەزیران
وەزارەتی خوێندنی باڵا و توێژینەوەی زانستی
سەرۆکایەتیی زانکۆی سۆران
بەڕێوەبەرایەتی پەیوەندییە ئەکادیمییەکان

حكومة إقليم كوردستان- العراق وزارة التعليم العالي و البحث العلمي رئاسة جامعة سوران مديرية العلاقات الأكاديمية

Ref: 1590
Date: 16th May 2018

Near East University
Near East Boulevard,
ZIP: 99138 Nicosia
TRNC Mersin 10
Turkey

Re: Reference of Permission to Conduct Research

This letter is to certify that Soran University gives permission to **Ms. Rezheen Nabee Ahmed**, holding an Iraqi passport number **A4856345**, to conduct a part of her research titled (Improving academic and nonacademic writing skills with different learning styles among EFL learners: a case study of northern Iraq) at Soran University/ Faculty of Arts in October 2018.

Should you require any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

This letter has been provided upon her request.

Sincerely,

ACADEMIC RELATION SORAN UNIVERSITY POSTGRADUATE STUDIES AND

Dr. Nahro Zagros
Vice President for Scientific Affairs

Cc:

- Office of the President
- Offices of the Vice President
- Directorate of the Personnel
- Directorate of Academic Relations

academic.relations@soran.edu.iq **Phone** (+964) 66 264 6502 **Address**: Kawa Rd., Soran, Erbil, Kurdistan Region - Iraq

APPENDIX E

Turnitin Report

THESIS

ORIGINALITY REPORT

19%	15%	9%	20%
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

6 1	Submitted to Yakın Doğu Üniversitesi Student Paper	1%
2	files.eric.ed.gov Internet Source	1%
3	"Assesing tourism impacts in the third world: a Nepal case study", Progress in Planning, 1995 Publication	1%
4	Submitted to Higher Education Commission Pakistan Student Paper	1%
5	citeseerx.ist.psu.edu Internet Source	1%
	dergipark.ulakbim.gov.tr Internet So	1%

urce

7	e-iji.net Internet Source	5%
8	Submitted to Oxford Brookes University Student Paper	1%