ANALYSIS OF PREFERENCES LEARNING STYLE AND GENDER IDENTITY IN LANGUAGE LEARNING

Uswatun Hasanah*


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BACKGROUND

Language learning is one of the most important needs and it has become an essential component in people’s lives. Because of numerous reasons such as studying at an English medium university or living in a foreign country, people all over the world are trying to learn a second, even a third language.

It is a common reality that cannot be denied that learning a second language (second language learning) or learning a language other than their mother tongue (mother tongue) is a major challenge. Learning a second language is a complex process, and the activities in which a person would fight beyond the limits of the first language that has been obtained in advance and try to reach a new language, new culture, and new ways of thinking, feeling and acting. In the process of second language acquisition, the learner must have total commitment, total involvement, response to

* Dosen tetap pada Jurusan Tarbiyah STAIN Watampone

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physical, intellectual and emotional total for the success of sending and receiving messages. Therefore, learning a second language is not a series of simple steps that can be programmed in a quick guide, so only a few people who managed to achieve fluency in a foreign language classroom of space restrictions. A theory of language teaching will explain the principles and methods of a particular technique, where a basic understanding of the characteristics of the style of teaching second language learning can be mastered very well. A teacher can successfully teach a foreign language if you can understand the complexity of the variables that influence the success of acquiring the second language. The complexity of the variables may be issues that arise with respect to the characteristics of learners, linguistic factors, learning processes, age, variable instructional, context, and purpose. Variable complexity of the highlights in this research is the characteristic learners which a teacher must constantly analyze and determine cognitive style that is owned by each of the students that the results of second language learning success. Learning should be designed so that it can accommodate different learning styles.

Therefore, there is a strong need to improve learning and retention during undergraduate education to ensure that students are prepared to handle the challenges that they will face both in future courses and after graduation. As instructors, we need to find ways to improve instruction at all levels of education to improve student learning, retention, and motivation.

One way to improve student motivation and performance is to adapt teaching approaches to meet the different learning style preferences of our students (Miller.2001). Learning style preferences are the manner in which, and the conditions under which, learners most efficiently and effectively perceive, process, store, and recall what they are attempting to learn (James W, Gardner D. 1995). Although it is known that students have a variety of learning style preferences (Lujan HL, DiCarlo SE. 2006), it is unknown if gender differences in learning style preferences exists among undergraduate physiology students. Knowing the students' learning style preferences will aide in the development of the most effective teaching approaches.

Oxford (1989) offers a synthesis of the studies carried out regarding the Language Learning Strategy (LLS) and the variables
that affect strategy choice. The results of studies carried out with respects to LLS choice and language being learned, duration, degree of awareness, age, and sex, affective variables such as attitudes, motivational level, personality characteristics, and general personality type. Learning styles is another variable but Oxford asserts that "little research has been dedicated to the relationship between learning strategy use and learning style". The purpose of this study is to investigate both the individual learning style preferences of learners. In addition to these, this study aims at finding out whether there are significant differences in the perceptual learning style and language learning strategy preferences between male and female students.

This study might prove useful to both language teachers and learners because it might raise teachers' awareness concerning their own learning and teaching styles. It is known that most teachers tend to teach in the way they were taught or in the way they preferred to learn. Sometimes conflicts might arise because of a mismatch between the teacher's teaching style and learner's learning styles, which might have negative consequences both on the part of the learner and teacher.

Raising students' awareness regarding their learning styles and strategies might make them not only more prepared for learning but also more analytic about their learning styles and the strategies they make use of. Reid (1995) states that developing an understanding of learning environments and styles "will enable students to take control of their learning and to maximize their potential for learning."

DISCUSSION

Definition of learning style

As it was the case with language learning strategies, the definition of learning styles is also a major concern among the scholars in the field. Dunn and Dunn (1979, as cited in Reid, 1987) define learning styles as "a term that describes the variations among learners in using one or more senses to understand, organize, and retain experience" (p. 89). Claxton and Ralston (1978) define the term as referring to a learner's "consistent way of responding and using stimuli in the context of learning".
Learning style in the ESL/EFL classroom offers teachers insights into the use of student (and teacher) learning styles and provides classroom teachers with appropriate learning strategies that they can use with students. Learning style can be defined as “cognitive, effective, and psychological traits that are relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive, interact with, respond to the learning environment.”

The knowledge of student preferred learning styles is vital if we, as educators, are to provide tailored strategies for individual students (Fleming ND. 1995). Knowing students’ preferred learning style also helps to overcome the predisposition of many educators to treat all students in a similar way as well as motivate teachers to move from their preferred mode(s) to using others.

Reid (1995:6) stated that learning style is a pervasive quality in the learning strategies or the learning behavior of an individual. Learning style refers to an individual’s natural, habitual and preferred ways of absorbing, processing, and retaining new information and skills which persist regardless of teaching methods or content area. Everyone has a learning style, but each person’s is as unique as a signature.

Three related concepts implicit in any concept of strategy role and style in learning a second language, namely autonomy, understanding, and action. These three concepts be increasingly important in recent years, especially with the increasing emphasis on teaching language pedagogic centered on the learner. Before the methods of "designer" emerged in the 1970s, there are largely centered teaching methodologies teachers. Students enter the classroom, they sat reverently chair, and waited for the teacher commanding them to do something. These commands sometimes form a sentence translation, memorization of rules, or dialogue repetition. Then the teachers seem to find the value of learner autonomy in the form of allowing the learner to do things like start oral production, solving problems in small groups, practicing a form of language pairs, and practice using the language outside class. Closely related with the concept of autonomy is the requirement for learners to be understood of their own learning process. The latter concept is a reminder to all that understanding without action is a relative would not be useful. Once the learners become aware of the trends, styles, and their strengths and
weaknesses, and then finally taking the right steps in the form of a variety of strategies available to them. Not all strategies appropriate for all learners. Therefore, it is important for a teacher to know earlier about learning styles of each student as a reference in determining a strategy. A learner, for example, already aware about their selves tend tolerant of ambiguity in the style of the right brain would not have needed sequence strategy to open up, be calm in learning languages difficulties or to see the image intact. Such a strategy is naturally already running. However, learners who otherwise-intolerant of ambiguity, analytical, linear thinking-clear understanding will benefit from these biases are obvious even taking strategic correct steps. If styles are common characteristics that distinguish one person from another, according to Brown, the strategy is "attacks "we specifically addressed to specific problem and highly variable within each individual, while another statement defines strategy sufficiently broad as" easier procedures learning task. Strategies often are unconscious and driven by goals ".

Types of learning style

Learning styles include perception preferences, which can be grouped into three categories: visual (seeing), auditory (hearing), and kinesthetic (sensing bodily movement). Most students are characterized by a mixture of two or three styles, with a dominant one among them.

1. Visual learners learn best when information is presented in a written language format or in another visual format such as pictures or diagrams. Therefore they like to read a lot, which requires concentration and time spent alone. Visual learners need the visual stimulation of bulletin boards, videos, and movies. They must have written directions if they are to function well in the classroom. The students who preferred the kinesthetic and tactile group preferred authentic language use. The learners who preferred the visual styles chose visualizations a strategy. Visual learners will learn better when they read or see the information. Visual learners had the tendency to use strategies involving reading alone, in a quiet place or paying attention to blackboards, movies, computer screens, and other forms of visual stimulation. Learning from a lecture may not be as easy. Trying some suggestions and creating some will work for them. The way that can be tried as follows: looking at the
person while they are talking. It will help they stay focused, it is usually better to work in a quiet place, however many visual learners do math with music playing in the background, Most visual learners study better by themselves, Taking lots of notes.

2. Auditory learners learn best when information is presented in an auditory language format. They enjoy the oral-aural learning channel. Thus, they want to engage in discussions, conversations, and group work. These students typically require only oral direction. Rossi in Reid found that being an auditory learner was a significant predictor of using memory strategies, using strategies for authentic language use. Auditory learners will learn better when information comes through ears. They need to hear it. Lecture situations will probably work well for them. They may not learn a swell just reading for a book. The auditory learners were found to be at ease without visual input and often manipulated strategies that encouraged conversation in a noisy, social environment with numerous sources of aural stimulation.

3. Tactile/kinesthetic learners learn best in hands-on learning settings in which they can physically manipulate something in order to learn about it. They like Total Physical Response activities, games, and role plays that let them get out of their chairs and move around. Kinesthetic learners will learn best by doing, moving, or hands-on experiences. Learning from a textbook or a lecture may not be as easy. Trying some suggestions and creating some will work for them. The kinesthetic students were found to be in need of movement strategies and the tactile ones needed strategies that required the manipulation of real objects in the learning environment. Yet, both kinesthetic and tactile learners were found to need to use the strategy of taking frequent breaks.

Reid (1998) draws a distinction between learning styles and learning strategies by focusing in what way they are distinct from each other. She refers to learning styles as “internally based characteristics, often not perceived or consciously used by learners, for the intake and comprehension of new information”, whereas learning strategies are defined as “external skills often used consciously by students to improve their learning”. The learning strategies, on the other hand, are said to be ‘external skills’, which
indicates they are more problem oriented and conscious. This also implies that they are more liable to change over time and depending on the task and materials used in the learning environment.

**Differences in Male & Female Learning Styles**

Generally, women's language is different from the language of men. Differences speech act has been known for a long time, women tend to express uncertainty language (evasive statements, tag questions, raising intonation for statements) than men who tend to show a lack of confidence in what they say. Men place more value in the conversation, chat status and reputation, racing take the lead, while women value relationships and friendships, fulfilling their role as being more cooperative. While the study of syntactic, women more use clause of cause and effect than men dominate use clause concessive. The point is there are many approaches were applied to examine gender differences based studies sociolinguistics, linguistic ethnography, conversation analysis, critical discourse analysis, discursive psychology, feminist post-structuralist and the scope of Korpus linguistic. While the investigation of gender in second language acquisition to students academically in the classroom based on the analysis of variations in learning styles are still rarely, but the understanding of the learner biases can create a step or strategy to produce successful learners in communicative aspects of a second language.

1. Brain Differences

The differences in male and female brains may account for differences in learning styles. Myelin is a covering that develops within the brain and speeds electrical impulses necessary for various brain functioning. Myelin achieves complete formation in female brains earlier than it does in male brains. Another difference is the corpus collosum, the center of the brain that connects emotion and logic centers, which is 20 percent larger in the female brain. This may explain why most women learn and act holistically while men tend to learn and act compartmentally.

2. Females

On average, girls develop verbal skills such as grammar, spelling and vocabulary more quickly than boys. Females tend to
speak more words than males, and women usually are very fluent in social interactions and perform well in cooperative learning situations. Women also lean toward inductive reasoning (expanding upon basic knowledge based on experience). The female brain also uses emotion as a stimulant toward learning and incorporates multiple senses in the process. On average, girls tend to outperform boys academically, possibly due to the way learning is structured in the classroom.

3. Males

Males usually are good at deductive reasoning. They use a set of criteria and evaluate concepts based on those criteria. Boys and men tend to learn more efficiently when they have plenty of space and when they can move around during the learning process. Males usually prefer visual aids (such as graphs, diagrams and symbols) and are likely to manipulate these visual representations efficiently. The male learning style gravitates heavily toward non-verbal communication. While boys may not outperform girls academically, they often are much more confident about their academic abilities than girls.

Gender Analysis in Language Learning Preferences

Gender is a variable which is taken into account of identifying the language Learning Strategy of the participants in this study. A vast number of studies have been conducted with respect to gender-related differences in LLS use. In a study of adult language learners, Ehrman and Oxford (1989) found that when compared with males, females reported significantly greater use of language learning strategies in four categories: general study strategies, functional practice strategies, strategies for searching for and communicating meaning, and self-management strategies. In another study, Oxford and Nyikos (1989) found that females, when contrasted with males, used language-learning strategies significantly more often in three of five strategy factors: formal rule-based practice strategies, general study strategies, and conversational input elicitation strategies. Ehrman and Nyikos (1989) state that the results obtained from their study fully support the findings of other studies concerning the effect of sex on second language learning. They assert that some other variables such as female superiority in verbal aptitude and social orientation, and
possible sex differences in integrative motivation, in addition to psychological type play a role in these sex differences.

There is a large body of literature available on gender differences in learning, and providing a comprehensive review of this topic is beyond the scope of this paper. Briefly, a gender-based preference in learning style is only one area in which males and females are unique. It has been reported that males have a preference for rational evaluation and logic, whereas females use “elaborative” processing in which they tend to seek personal relevance or individual connections with the material being taught (Lie I.Y, Angelique L, Cheong E. 2004). In addition, males tend to be more achievement oriented, whereas females are more socially and performance oriented (Chang WC. 2004). The genders also differ in their beliefs about what is most important to student learning, with females ranking social interaction with other students and self-confidence as higher than males (Brassard C. 2004). Furthermore, males are likely to attribute their success in the classroom to external causes, such as teaching, whereas females generally see their success are being directly related to their efforts in the classroom (Grollino E, Velayo RS.1996). This suggests that males tend to be more externally focused, but females tend to be more introspective and self-critical.

Kaylani (1996) also reports significant differences in strategy use between males and females. Female students used significantly more memory, cognitive, compensation, and affective strategies than male students. There was no significant difference in the use of metacognitive and social strategies between the two genders.

The findings of Green and Oxford (1995) also indicated higher levels of strategy use by females than by males. Fourteen strategies, some of which are the use flashcards to remember words, reviewing English lessons often, connecting words and locations, skimming and reading carefully, seeking L1 words similar to L2 words, making summaries of information, etc., were used significantly more often by females in that study, although only one (watching TV programs and video movies in English) was used significantly more often by males. But Ehrman and Oxford (1990) also reported that the number and kind of strategies used by females were similar to those used by males.
In addition, Selime Tabanlioglu (2003,81) states that a statistically significant gender difference in the preference of the tactile learning styles category was found between females and males, males preferring tactile learning more than females. With respect to the other learning styles, no significant difference was observed. Referring back to the findings of the studies in the literature, it was found that the results of this study are parallel the Reid’s (1987) results. It’s concluded that there was difference in the use of the tactile learning style category between males and females, males being more tactile than females. The findings of this study yielded the same result.

Oxford and Nyikos (1989) also reported that in their study, besides the conversational input elicitation strategies reflecting social interaction, two more types of strategies – general study strategies and formal rule-related practice strategies- were used significantly more often by females rather than by males. The researchers relate this result to factors such as the females’ desire for good grades, a need for social approval, their verbal superiority to males, and females’ greater willingness to conform to conventional norms.

Not all studies that examined learning strategy use between the two sexes found significant differences. Grace (2000) investigated the gender differences in vocabulary retention and access to translations for beginning language learners in Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL). The analyses of the results revealed that when students were given bilingual multiple-choice tests, there were no significant differences between males and females on their short-term and long-term retention scores. Moreover, there were no significant differences in the amount of time males and females spent looking up translations. It was also reported that the findings of the survey suggested that males and females could equally benefit from a CALL environment.

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that between female and male have difference differences in learning styles. There is a significant difference in learning style preferences between males and females for some fields. For instance males
tend to be more achievement oriented, whereas females are more socially and performance oriented. Another way is males preferring tactile learning more than females. Also female students used significantly more memory, cognitive, compensation, and affective strategies than male students. The other results also show that female and male have not a significant difference.

Therefore teachers should be more consciousness concerning to their own learning and teaching styles. Instructors tend to teach in the way they were taught or in the way they preferred to learn. It is the responsibility of the instructor and the student to be aware of student learning style preferences to improve learning. As instructors, we need to assess and understand how to reach all students by understanding how to present information in multiple modes. We can help students more effective both in and out of the classroom, if we are aware of their learning style and can assist them in determining their preferences. As a student, it is vital to be self-aware of preferences to adjust study techniques to best fit each individual, even when the information and instruction provided does not match the preferred style.

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