Investigating EFL University Students' Learning Styles

Asst.Prof.Dr. Hussein Ali Ahmed [*]

A. <u>The Theoretical Part:</u>

I. Introduction:

It is not easy to master a language other than our first language. This is so due to impeding factors that influence such learning. Learning styles (henceforth LSs), which refer to "the overall patterns that give general direction to learning behavior" (Cornett, 1983: 9), or are "the biologically and developmentally imposed set of characteristics that make the same teaching method wonderful for some learners and terrible for others" (Dunn & Griggs, 1988: 3), form a prominent influential factor that enables learners to employ various ways to bring about better learning outcomes.

In the field of foreign language learning (henceforth FLL), LSs play a pivotal role in determining how well students learn a foreign language (henceforth FL) (Oxford, 2003:1). Yet, it was not until fairly recently that researchers began to handle the already extensive body of literature on LSs in their attempt to provide possible explanations for the individual differences in FLL contexts (van Els et al., 1984: 112). The impetus behind such involvement was due to the fact that although success in learning an FL depends on a variety of factors such as the duration and intensity of the language

[*] **Dept. of English/ College of Arts / University of Mosul**

course, the characteristics and the abilities of the teacher, the appropriateness of the teaching methodology, the quality of the textbook, and the amount of natural practice of the new language, the different ways, i.e. LSs, via which learners approach FLL, should be closely looked into, analyzed and evaluated (Cohen and Dornyei, 2002: 176).

The present research intends to find solutions to the **problem** that in the field of FL teaching and learning, students' LSs are often ignored and considered as an insignificant component of the learning process. This is evident from the fact that the students' ways of learning English as a foreign language (henceforth EFL) are rarely, if not never, attended to by the majority of teachers at university level. In other words, university teachers do not heed the importance to establish and identify LSs in spite of their awareness that there are many ways to "teach" as there are to learn, and that students do not all see their learning in the same way, i.e. students have very different preferences for how, when, where and how often to learn.

Such assumptions have resulted in noticeable weakness in EFL university students' level; a phenomenon that undeniably leads to noticeable failure on the part of these students, and duly to reciprocal accusations among the parties involved, especially students and teachers. As such, the present research poses the following research questions in an attempt to shed light on an effective element within the educational process, namely students and their LSs:
1. What LSs are used by EFL university students?
2. Is there variation in EFL university students' preference of the various
   LSs?

The present research **aims,** in the first place, at identifying the LSs used by EFL university students. A second aim is to identify the LSs preferred by EFL university students

so as to be recommended for better adaptation, and consequently application, by EFL teachers at the level in question. It further aims at highlighting the differences in the use of such styles regarding students' gender, i.e. male and female.

The present research **hypothesizes** the following:

1. There are no differences in EFL students' preference of the different LSs.

2. There are no differences between male and female EFL students in terms of their preference of the different LSs.

3. There are no differences between male and female EFL students as far

as their use of the sub-LSs is concerned.

The current research is **limited to** the study of LSs used by university EFL students. It is further limited to a sample of students at the Dept. of English, College of Basic Education, University of Mosul, during the second term of the academic year 2011-2012.

As for its **value and significance**, it is worthy to note that the value of understanding individual LSs possessed by students in the classroom is immeasurable. Such styles can impact a variety of areas in the classroom such as environment, student praise or reinforcement, class structure, and teaching methods. Hence, the present research is expected to be of value to all those involved in the process of teaching English as a foreign language at all educational levels, namely students, teachers and teaching materials designers. As for students, they can make use of the theoretical part of the study by familiarizing themselves with the details on LSs so as to know the effectiveness of each style in general and in learning EFL in particular. Students can also benefit from the experimental part of the present research as the results will highlight the types of the LSs that are mostly preferred by EFL students.

Concerning teachers, knowledge of students' LSs may help teachers handle the diversity of students' differences and thus set new guidelines on how to better help them in achieving good performance in the EFL classroom. Teachers are also expected to be acquainted with their students' learning preferences and would duly adapt their teaching strategies and techniques in the light of such preferences in such a way that can bring about better achievement. Finally, teaching material designers might find in the empirical part of the research and the results arrived at a good source for the adaptation and development of such materials so as to better fit the learning situation and bring about better educational outcomes.

II. Definition of Learning Styles:

There is in the related literature a growing evidence proving that LSs form a major component of the teaching and learning process as they highlight the variations between learners in preferring one or more styles to understand, organize, and retain information (See Reid, 1987; Ehrman, 1990; Ehrman & Oxford, 1990, 1995; Oxford, 1999; Ehrman et al., 2003; Ehrman & Leaver, 2003; Oxford, 2003). Accordingly, there have been a number of definitions of LSs. Ausubel (1968: 170) views LSs as "self-consistent and enduring individual differences in cognitive organization and functioning". As for Keefe (1979: 4), LSs are "cognitive, affective and physiological traits that are relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive, interact with, and respond to the learning environment". On his part, Skehan (1991: 288) defines an LS as "a general disposition, voluntary or not, toward processing information in a particular way". Also, Grasha (1996: 41) states that LSs are "personal qualities that influence a student's ability to acquire information, to interact with peers and the teacher, and otherwise participate in learning experiences". According to Brown (2000: 113), a style

is a term that refers to consistent and rather enduring tendencies or preferences within the individual. As such, styles are general characteristics of intellectual functioning and personality type as well, that pertain to the individual, and differentiate him/her from someone else. They characterize the general pattern in one's feeling or thinking, the way one learns things in general, and the way one attacks a problem.

The operational definition of LSs is that they refer to the various approaches or ways of learning used by 3rd year students at the College of Basic Education, university of Mosul to learn the subjects related to EFL in a better way and bring about better achievement.

III. Classification of Language Learning Styles:

The controversy over the classification of LSs has made different researchers come out with different classifications of such styles. Such variation in the way LSs are classified is ascribed to the learners' numerous ways, approaches, and styles to language learning, i.e. learners individual differences. Added to that, Felder (1995: 21) states that any classification of LSs should be done according to the following: the type of information the student preferentially perceives: sensory- sights, sounds, physical sensations, or intuitive- memories, ideas, insights. The most effective modality of the perception of sensory information: visual- pictures, diagrams, graphs, demonstrations, or verbal- written and spoken words and formulas; learners preferred ways for processing information: actively - through engagement in physical activity or discussion, or reflectively- through introspection; learners' ways of progression toward understanding: sequentially- in a logical progression of small incremental steps, or globally- in large jumps, holistically; and learners most comfortable organization of information inductive- facts and observations are given, underlying principles are inferred, or deductive-

principles are given, consequences and applications are deduced.

Yet, in spite of such diversity that emerges from the available literature, the following classifications of LSs are considered particularly relevant and useful to understand the process of FLL.

A. Kolb's Learning Styles classification (1984):

Kolb (1984) indicates that perceived information converted into knowledge can be grouped into four categories:

1. Concrete Experience.

2. Abstract Conceptualization.

These two categories indicate the way learners take information.

3. Reflective Observation.

4. Active experimentation.

These two categories indicate the way learners internalize information.

According to Kolb's model, an ideal learning process subsumes all the aforementioned categories as it can meet all types of situational demands. Concerning the resulted LSs, they are combinations of the learner's preferred approaches, and the learners who adopt them are labelled as follows:

- **Convergers** are learners who prefer both abstract conceptualization and active experimentation. They manage practical applications of ideas in an efficient manner and make use of deductive reasoning to solve problems.
- **Divergers** are learners who favour both concrete experience and reflective observation. Imagination plays a crucial role in the learning process of such learners. These learners also derive their ideas and see things from different perspectives.
- **Assimilators** are learners who are inclined towards abstract conceptualization and reflective observation. Inductive reasoning forms a basis for their ability to create theoretical models,

- **Accommodators** are learners who are good at using concrete experience and active experimentation. They are interested in active engagement with the world, They also like actual doing of things rather than mere studying of them.

B. van Els et al's Classification (1984):

van Els et al (1984: 112-115) state that there are three major LS dimensions which seem to be relevant to FL learning. There are, first **field independent** learners who tend to perceive analytically particular relevant items in a field as discrete from the surrounding field as a whole rather than embedded in the field itself. Just contrary to this group are **field dependent** learners who tend to perceive globally. In other words, their perception tends to be dominated by the total field since the parts embedded in the field are not easily perceived. Second, there are **impulsive** learners, who on confronting a problem solving task, tend to make a quick, or gambling guess of an uncertain response. Opposite to this group of learners are those who are **reflective. Reflective** learners tend to make a slower, more calculated decision of a response that might be utterly correct. The **broad category** learners form the third group in van Els et al's Classification. These learners tend to accept a wide range of items or instances as belonging to a category, i.e. subsuming too many items under one linguistic rule, thus risking the inclusion of items that do not really fit the category. Also, opposite to this group are **narrow category** learners who tend to accept a much more restricted range, i.e. they face difficulty in making the generalizations necessary for language learning as they tend to create rules for every item. By so doing, they risk the inclusion of items that do in fact fit the category.

C. Reid and Erhman's Classification (1995, 1996):

According to Reid (1995) and Erhman (1996), LSs are categorized as **visual** learners who prefer to learn through

visual channels, i.e. seeing. They like to read a lot. As such they need more to have more concentration and time. Contrary to visual learners are **auditory** learners who enjoy the oral-aural learning channel. Thus, auditory learners want to engage in discussions, conversations, and group working. These learners typically require oral directions. There are also **extroverted** learners who are interested in concrete experience, interaction with people outside their learning circle and develop relationships with others. Opposite to these learners are **introverted** learners who are more interested in doing works through independent situation. In other words, they are comfortable in working individually. Still a third dichotomous group subsumes both **abstract and intuitive** learners who usually rely on their background knowledge and opinions to infer what is not stated, and **concrete and thinking** who tend to learn in a step-by-step sequence. There are also **open-oriented** learners who prefer to keep all options open vs. **closure-oriented.** The **global** learners are disposed to use strategies for integrating materials into a summary vs. more **particular** learners who focus more on details, and remember specific information about a topic well. Finally, there are **synthesizing** learners who tend to use strategies for integrating material into a summary vs. **analytic** learners who are inclined to focus on details.

D. Grasha-Reichmann's Classification (1996):

 The Grasha-Reichmann student LS scales (1996) promotes the understanding of LSs through the following six main categories of learners:

- **Independent** or **introverted** learners who prefer independent study, self-paced instruction, and working alone on course projects than with other learners. Contrary to these learners are the so-called **Dependent** or **extroverted** learners who view the teacher and other

learners as a source of support and guidance. They also prefer having an authority figure to tell them what to do.

- **Competitive** learners whose aim is to perform better than other learners so that their academic accomplishments can be acknowledged. There are, on the contrary, **Collaborative** learners whose acquisition of information is not done in isolation but rather through cooperation and sharing with teacher and other learners. These learners usually prefer teaching sessions or lectures where small group discussions and group projects are prevalent.

- **Avoidant** learners are not interested in attending classes and in acquiring information derived from the teaching materials in such classes. Hence, ongoing classroom activities form a source of unrest and disfavour by such learners. These learners are just contrary to the **Participant** learners who are quite interested in class work, and are strongly aware of and like teachers' expectations.

E. Brown's Classification (2000):

- **Field independent** learners can differentiate between the parts and their whole, i.e. they can see the parts and not their relationship to the whole. In other words, concentration on something, analysis of separate variables without interference by the surrounding variables are the main properties of such learners. Furthermore, these learners are faster in learning as they assimilate the materials taught by identifying the main idea from the whole details of such materials. They also tend to be more independent, competitive, and self-confident. This is on one hand. On the other hand, there are **field dependent learners** who usually perceive the whole picture, the larger view, and the general configuration of a problem or idea or event. This means that these learners usually look at the whole picture or they read the whole subject in their attempt to grasp the main idea; a point which entails that they need

more time to understand a class content. Furthermore, these learners tend to be more socialized. They derive their self-identity from other learners around them, and are usually more empathic and perspective of the feelings, and thoughts of others.

- **Left-Brain Functioning** learners are characterized by the dominance of the left hemisphere of the brain where language and speech are produced, and where intellectual, logical, and analytical thoughts with mathematical linear processing of information seem to be located (McCarthy, 1987). Contrariwise, **Right-Brain Functioning** learners perceive and remember visual, tactile, auditory images and control functions related to emotional and social needs.

- **Ambiguity Tolerant** learners are more "open minded" as far as the acceptance of the ideas, events and facts, that are contrary to their own views, is concerned. They "learn best when there are opportunities for experiences, regardless of positive or negative experiences. They dare to take risks and prefer interacting with other people" (Razawi et al, 2011: 180). While **Ambiguity Intolerant** learners are more "close minded". They do not easily accept propositions different from their existing system. They reject every idea, event or fact that does not fit into an acceptable place in their cognitive organization. Ambiguity intolerant learners also learn effectively when the situations are less flexible. They would also go for less risky circumstances and they need more of structured situations in order to organize their learning.

- **Reflective** learners usually have deep thinking of things in their attempt to make required decisions. Put it differently, the steps they follow in making decisions are usually slower and more calculated. Conversely, **Impulsive** learners tend to make a quick guess and do not weigh all the considerations in a problem. Ewing and Yong (1992) label

reflective/impulsive learners as intuitive/systematic ones. According to them, "an intuitive learner makes a number of different gambles on the basis of "hunches", with possibly several successive gambles before a solution is achieved. While systematic learners tend to weigh all the loopholes, and then, after extensive reflection, venture a solution".

- **Visual** learners**,** and their auditory counterparts**,** are so labeled in the light of their preferred mode of presentation; i.e. the learning channels with which they are mostly comfortable. Therefore, **Visual** learners favour using the sense of sight for obtaining a great deal of information. They learn better by reading, rather than lectures, conversations, and oral instructions. On the contrary, there are **auditory** learners who are more interested in aural input, and accordingly enjoy lectures, conversations, and oral instructions. Finally, Brown (2000: 122) points out that there are learners who are considered bimodal; i.e. input should be presented to such learners via both aural and visual channels, since learning via one mode or the other does not contribute to a difference in outcome.

F. Felder and Silverman's Classification (2005):

Quite recently, a classification of LSs into four dimensions, namely sensing and intuitive learners, visual and verbal learners, active and reflective learners as well as sequential and global learners has been put forward by Felder and Silverman (2005; cited in Felder & Spurlin, 2005).

- **Sensing** learners prefer concrete experiences around and within them. They mostly tend to be practical, methodical and oriented towards facts. Hands-on procedures form the main source for the learning of such learners. Contrariwise, **Intuitive** learners feel more at ease with the learning characterized by abstraction or gist of the situations. They are mostly known as creative and innovative problem

solvers as they can manage solving problems in a short period of time.

- **Visual** learners, in their endeavour to support their learning, prefer learning through pictures, diagrams, flow charts and demonstrations. Conversely, **Verbal** learners are more interested in learning through written tasks prepared by teachers. They usually prefer spoken explanations to aid their understanding.
- **Active** learners prefer physical activity, They are interested in processing information through involvement in discussions. Contrary to them, **Reflective** learners process information by reflecting on their past experiences before taking any decision to move forward.
- **Sequential** learners usually think in a linear manner. They can manage doing tasks even if provided with the least explanation of material required. Contrariwise, **Global** learners think in a systematic manner; i.e. they are more organized, yet they face difficulty on applying new material unless they fully assimilate such material by either completely understand or relating it to material they have already been exposed to (Felder and Brent, 2005).

IV. Literature Review:

Due to the wide-ranged dimensions of LSs and the numerous variables that affect such styles, Tyacke (1998) specifies a number of factors that are encountered while identifying LSs. Firstly, LSs have a complicated nature that makes the analysis of a learner's overall learning profile a quite difficult task. Secondly, learners possibly incline to utilize different LSs in various learning contexts. Thirdly, there may be bias in the methodology used in the transfer of information; i.e. the methodology might be in favour of a certain type of learner over another.

Yet, there have been attempts by many researchers to identify learners' different LSs in relation to certain variables, namely age, sex, length of time spent in the foreign culture, field of study, level of education, and culture.

Farr (1971), in his attempt to elicit the LS preferences of a sample of postsecondary students, administered a self-reporting questionnaire. He found out that the learners' preferred LSs paralleled their actual learning strengths.

Dunn and Dunn (1979) found that only 20-30% of school age learners appeared to be auditory learners; 40% were visual, and that the remaining 30-40% were tactile/kinesthetic, visual/tactile, or some other combination.

In another study also carried out with postsecondary learners, Domino (1979) found that college students who had been taught about preferred LSs scored higher on tests, fact knowledge, attitude, and efficiency than those taught in instructional styles different from their preferred LSs.

Researchers' attempt to identify the more external, applied modes of LSs had resulted in the development of a number of paradigms in the mid- to late 1970s. For instance, seminal research by Dunn and Dunn (1972) resulted in The Learning Style Inventory (Dunn et al, 1975). The latter represents a self-reporting questionnaire that enables public school students to identify their LS preferences. Reid (1987:88) states that among the 21 identified LSs by Dunn (1983) and Dunn and Dunn (1979), reference had been particularly made to perceptual LSs which outline differences between learners in the use of one or more sense to grasp, organize and retain experience.

Dunn's research (1983, 1984) on U.S. school young learners resulted in the identification of the following four basic perceptual learning channels (or modalities):
1. Visual learning: reading, studying charts
2. Auditory learning: listening to lectures, audiotapes

3. Kinesthetic learning: experiential learning, i.e. full physical involvement with a learning situation
4. Tactile learning: "hands-on" learning, such as building models or doing laboratory experiments

Carbo (1983 cited in Reid, 1987: 89) investigated the perceptual styles of readers, and found that good readers prefer to learn through their visual and auditory senses, while poor readers have a stronger preference for tactile and kinesthetic learning.

Reid (1987) investigated the LS preferences of ESL learners. The results indicated ESL learners' strong preference of kinesthetic and tactile LSs in comparison with audio and visual ones. Added to that, ESL learners showed a negative preference for group learning.

Cheng and Banya (1998) administered seven questionnaires, in the form of self-reported surveys, to elicit the LSs of a sample of 140 male freshman learners at the Chinese Military academy. The results obtained revealed no significant differences in the learners' LSs preferences for any single LS. The results also showed learners' preference of the perceptual LSs of auditory, tactile, and individual learning. Finally, the sample showed significant preference of the visual LS as reading books was more effective than listening to lectures. Furthermore, both researchers present some more findings of their research and as follows:

- Learners of kinesthetic LS preference had more confidence and more positive attitudes towards and beliefs about FLL than their counterparts with other perceptual LSs style preferences.
- Learners with the Individual LS preference used more language learning strategies. They were also less tolerant of ambiguity.
- Learners with the Tactile LS preference were more anxious about learning English.

- Learners with the Auditory LS preference liked to build friendship and speak with speakers of English.

A study was conducted by Stapa (2003) to investigate LSs preferences of (53) students of English for Hospitality Purposes at the University of Kebangsaan, Malaysia. The sample was asked to respond to a questionnaire form adopted from Brindley (1984). The study arrived at the following results:

- Students' tendency to work in pairs or small groups.
- A noticeable percentage of students expressed preference of more outdoor classroom activities that would help them gain proficiency in English.
- Students did not like the types of learning that focus merely on receptive skills. In other words, students preferred class content equally emphasizes both receptive and productive skills.
- Students preferred instructive television programmes more than the extensive use of blackboard or tape recorders.

Kavaliauskiene (2003) carried out a study to explore learners' methodological preferences for learning English for Specific Purposes (ESP). The sample of the study comprised (43) students of law from University of Lithuania who were asked to respond to a questionnaire adopted from Nunan (1991) with some slight modifications. The study arrived at the following results:

- Slightly more than half of the sample preferred a communicative approach as a means to perfect their language skills by working in pairs or small groups, taking part in projects and practicing English by talking to their peers.
- When given assignments, 65% of the learners preferred getting information on their own, listening to recordings in class and taking notes.

Gune (2004) administered The Index of Learning Style to (367) randomly selected preparatory school students at Gazy University, Turkey, to determine the LSs and examine the relationship between students' LS preferences and the faculty students will study in, taking the variables of gender, proficiency level of English and achievement scores on listening, reading, grammar, and writing in the English course into consideration. No differences were found between the LSs preferences of the members in the sample in terms of the variables already referred to.

In their attempt to explore the LLS preferences of a sample of (219) learners from different studying levels and of different ages at two language institutes in Iran, and the degree of their teachers' awareness, Riazi and Riasati (2007) adopted Brindly's (1984) questionnaire and administered it to the samples of learners and teachers. They arrived at the following conclusions:
- Concerning LLSs, learners did not prefer working individually; a style that was favoured by the sample of teachers.
- Learners mostly preferred learning vocabulary by using words in sentences, and guessing the meaning of unknown words rather than looking them up in a dictionary; a style that was wrongly perceived by teachers who thought that their students like to learn new words through translation.
- Learning about culture aroused learners and their teachers' interest as both samples indicated their awareness of the crucial role played by culture in FLL as it develops learners' cultural competence and, in turn, their efficient learning of the new language.
- Teachers were aware of their students' LS preferences in some cases, but were not in some others.

There was also a study conducted by Hoque (2008) who investigated the LSs preferences in learning EFL of a

randomly selected sample of (130) higher secondary college students in Bangladesh. The selected sample was asked to state their views through a questionnaire on how they preferred learning English. Unfortunately, no literature could be accessed to concerning the results of this study.

Kara (2009) interviewed (100) 2nd year learners studying in ELT Department in Anadoula University, Turkey and their FL teachers. The study aimed at investigating the outcomes of the mismatch, if any, between the learners' LLSs and their teachers' styles of teaching. The researcher concluded that:

- The visual and the auditory LLSs were the preferred by both learners and teachers.
- Teachers did not accommodate their teaching styles to meet the learners' needs, and
- learners showed frustration as their teachers were not teaching according to their preferred LSs.

In a study conducted in public and private institutions in Cordoba, Sucre, Atlántico and Colombia, Juris (2009) investigated the LLSs of (254) ESL learners, and found out that the kinesthetic style was the most prevalent followed by the tactile and then the auditory style.

On their part, Mulalic et al. (2009), designed a questionnaire to explore the perceptual LSs, and to assess the LSs, namely visual, auditory, kinesthetic and tactile of a sample of students of ESL in Malaysia. They arrived at the following results:

- Teachers and students alike were not aware of LSs and their significant role in the learning process.
- The kinesthetic LS was found to be the dominant.
- Gender played a role in differentiating prominently between male and female students preferred LSs. Male students were more kinesthetically and auditory oriented than female students.

- Students' ethnic backgrounds also played a role in highlighting significant differences in all LSs. For instance, Indian students were visual, while Chinese and Malaysia students preferred the kinesthetic .

Mulalic et al. recommended that on designing teaching materials, the differences between students' preferred LSs should be taken into account.

Finally, Ramayha (2009) also investigating the LSs of both male and female ESL students in Malaysia, conducted a study on a sample of 207 male and 199 female students. The sample (both males and females) showed preference for both visual and auditory LSs, though females were higher in their preference than males.

B. The Practical Part:

V. Procedure and Data Collection:

The procedure adopted in the present research is two-fold. First, it is theoretical in terms of tackling a number of topics and subtopics that are relevant to the subject under discussion, i.e. LSs. Second, it is practical as a questionnaire of (36) items that stand for the main types and subtypes of LLSs has been administered to a sample of EFL university students selected randomly from among the students at the Department of English, College of Basic Education, University of Mosul, during the second term of the academic year 2011-2012 to investigate their LSs in learning EFL.

The respondents were asked to give responses to a (36-item) questionnaire which was adapted and modified from (Oxford, 1993 cited in Reid (1995). The questionnaire has six major themes, namely Physical Senses, Exposing Self to Learning Situations, Handling Possibilities, Approaching Tasks, Dealing with Input, and Dealing with Ideas. However, the researcher made some slight modification to the questionnaire, in the light of the suggestions put forward by the panel of jurors (See Appendix 1), to establish validity. The

questionnaire was then piloted, on 2 occasions, with a group of 15 students who represented a sub-sample of the intended study population, and the results showed that the questionnaire demonstrated internal reliability, achieving an alpha coefficient of 0.797 for the items measuring students' learning preferences.

VI. The Population:

The population of the present research includes all the EFL students, males and females, enrolled in the Department of English, College of Basic Education, University of Mosul, during the second term of the academic year 2011-2012.

VII. The Sample of the Research:

The sample of the research is drawn from among the population already referred to. It includes (78) students (39 males and 39 females) EFL 3rd year students.

VIII. The Model Adopted:

The model adopted is that originated by Rebbeca L. Oxford (1993) entitled "Style Analysis Survey" and designed to assess language learners' general LSs. It has been adapted first by Julie Chi and Andrew Cohen (cited in Reid, 1995). It has been adopted by the present researcher after modifications and suggestions put forward by the Jury Members so as to fit the Iraqi context. As such, the model for the present research subsumes (6) macro LSs, each of which includes (2) micro LSs, each of which is represented by (3) items as outlined in the questionnaires. (See Appendices 2 and 3).

IX. Data Analysis and Discussion of Results:

To provide more evidence for consolidating the findings of the questionnaire, the researcher opted for a T-test for one sample. The analysis of results revealed the following:

Concerning the first hypothesis which states: "There are no differences in EFL students' preference of the different

LSs", Table (1) presents the order of the LSs preferred by the sample of EFL students.

Table (1): T-test for the Order of the Main Learning Styles Preferred by the Sample of EFL Students

Sample	Learning Styles	Deg. of freedom	Cal. Mean	Stand Dev	Cal. T	Tab T	Sig. level
78	**Handling Possibilities:** (1): Random (Intuitive) (2) Concrete (Sequential)	77	22.61	2.75	7.2	1.96	0.05
	Using Physical Senses: (1) Visual (2) Auditory		21.75	2.58	7.0		
	Dealing with Input (1) Global (Independent) (2) Particular (Dependent)		21.53	2.74	6.7		
	Dealing with Ideas (1) Analytic (2) Synthesizing		21.51	3.39	5.6		
	Approaching Tasks (1)Closure-Oriented (2) open		20.76	3.31	5.5		
	Exposing Self to Learning Situations (1) Extrovert (2) Introvert		17.32	2.85	5.3		

It is evident from Table (1) that EFL university students, both males and females, do not prefer the use of the different LSs to the same level. The mean scores of the first five learning styles, namely Handling Possibilities, Using Physical Senses, Dealing with Input, Dealing with Ideas, and Approaching tasks show minor differences in students

preferences. The mean score (17.32) of the last LS "Exposing Self to Learning Situations " which is well below the mean scores of other LSs makes hypothesis no.1 be rejected.

As for the second hypothesis which states: "There are no differences between male and female EFL students in terms of their use of the different LSs", the results show no significant differences between male and female students preference of the use of five main LSs, namely Using Physical Senses, Exposing Self to Learning Situations, Handling Possibilities, Dealing with Ideas and Dealing with Input. The only LS where EFL students have shown differences in the preference in terms of gender is "Approaching Tasks"; i.e. there is a significant difference between male and female students. Consider Table (2):

Table (2): Results of the T-test for the Difference between Male and Female Students in Preferring the Main Learning Styles

Main Learning Styles	Group	Degree of Freedom	Cal. Mean	Stand. Dev.	Cal. T	Tab. T	Sig. Level
Using Physical Senses: (1) Visual (2) Auditory	Males		20.74	2.72	0.44	1.96	Not Sig.
	Females		20.76	2.47			
Exposing Self to Learning Situations (1) Extroverted (2) Introverted	Males		17.66	3.24	1.07	1.96	Not Sig.
	Females	76	16.97	2.40			
Handling Possibilities: (1): Random (Intuitive) (2) Concrete (Sequential)	Males		22.20	2.67	1.32	1.96	Not Sig.
	females		23.02	2.80			
Approaching Tasks: (1) Closure-Oriented (2) Open	Males		19.33	3.22	4.22	1.96	Sig.
	Females		22.20	3.76			
Dealing with Ideas (1) Synthesizing (2) Analytic	Males		21.79	3.00	0.66	1.96	Not Sig.
	Females		21.28	3.76			
Dealing with Input (1) Global (Independent) (2) Particular (Dependent)	Males		21.23	2.87	0.69	1.96	Not Sig.
	Females		20.79	2.62			

With regard to the third hypothesis which states: "There are no differences between male and female EFL students in terms of their preference of the use of the sub-LSs", Table (3) presents the results of the T-test for the difference between male and female students in preferring the sub-styles:

Table (3): The Results of the T-test for the Difference between Male and Female Students in Preferring the Sub-styles

Main style no.	Sub-style no.	Group	Degree of Freedom	Cal. Mean	Stand. Dev.	Cal. T	Tab. T	Sig. Level
Using Physical Senses1	Visual	Males		11.53	1.91			Not Sig.
		Females	78	12.38	2.11	1.85	1.96	
	Auditory	Males		9.20	2.44			Not Sig.
		Females	78	8.38	2.27	1.53	1.96	
Exposing Self to Learning Situations	Extroverted	Males		7.64	2.67			Sig.
		Females	78	6.17	2.06	2.70	1.96	
	Introverted	Males		10.17	2.29			Not Sig.
		Females	78	10.79	1.65	1.35	1.96	
Handling Possibilities	Random (Intuitive)	Males		9.92	2.06			Not Sig.
		Females	78	10.07	1.86	0.34	1.96	
	Concrete (Sequential)	Males		12.28	2.11			Not Sig.
		Females	78	12.94	1.71	1.52	1.96	
Approaching Tasks	Closure-Oriented	Males		8.28	2.49			Sig.
		Females	78	10.82	2.34	4.62	1.96	
	Open	Males		11.05	2.24			Not Sig.
		Females	78	11.30	2.19	0.51	1.96	
Dealing with Ideas	Synthesizing	Males		11.20	2.14			Not Sig.
		Females	78	11.94	2.23	0.51	1.96	
	Analytic	Males		10.58	1.92			Not Sig.
		Females	78	10.33	2.10	0.56	1.96	
Dealing with Input	Global (Independent)	Males		10.02	1.69			Sig.
		Females	78	9.05	2.11	2.24	1.96	
	Particular (Dependent)	Males		11.20	1.73			Not Sig.
		Females	78	12.00	2.10	1.82	1.96	

The results show that there are no significant differences between male and female EFL students as far as their preference of the sub-styles belonging to the main LSs: Using Physical Senses, Handling Possibilities and dealing with Ideas. However, the results show significant differences between male and female EFL students' preference of the sub-styles belong to the LSs: Exposing Self to Learning Situations, Approaching Tasks and Dealing with Ideas. To be more

specific, male and female EFL students show differences in their preference of the sub-style "Extroverted" belonging to the main LSs "Exposing Self to Learning Situations" and the sub-style "Global, i.e. independent" belonging to the main LS "Dealing with Input". The differences here are in favour of male students. While the difference in EFL students preference of the sub-style "Closure, i.e. Oriented" belonging to the main LS "Approaching Tasks" is in favour of female EFL students.

XI. Conclusions, Recommendations and Suggestions for Further Research

A. Conclusions:

Individual differences have for long been pinpointed as a factor of vital role in the process of FL teaching and learning. They are said to influence the way learners approach and manage their learning of the new language and its various tasks. Such differences either hinder or support learners and have been the source of what is known as LSs. LSs refer to learners' general disposition, voluntary or not, to process information or approach learning tasks in a particular way. They outline learners' preferences of some approaches rather than others when handling learning tasks at large and those of FLL in particular. This is on one hand. On the other hand, since learning an FL without teachers' good acquaintance with students' preference of certain ways is similar to sailing without a good guide, any negligence and ignorance on the part of EFL teachers of this crucial component, i.e. learners' LSs, would inevitably lead to poor performance. Likewise, learners' knowledge of certain effective LSs usually culminates in better and more effective learning. Putting things together, teachers who can make learners recognize their LSs, accommodate such styles and adapt their teaching styles accordingly can win the whole battle and not only a half of it.

In the light of what has been so far stated, the following concluding points are worthy to be forwarded:

- General Conclusions:

1. Researchers, educationalists, psychologists, FL teachers and learners have for long decades acknowledged the importance of LSs as a crucial component of any teaching learning process.

2. Learners' differences, usually referred to as individual differences, have been recognized, but not attended to as required via the design and preparation of teaching programs that fit different categories of learners.

3. Learners' differences have formed the basis and paved the way for close investigation of the different approaches learners usually adopt in approaching and tackling different learning tasks, i.e. learners' LSs.

4. The more LSs learners use, the more flexible and successful the learners are. If learners use limited LSs as their preferences, it is more challenging for them to "adjust" to teachers' teaching styles.

5. There is no LS which is better than other ones. Every LS has its own   points of strength and weakness, but EFL teachers should use the LSs   according to the students' needs, type of activities and studying stages.

- Research Conclusions:

1. EFL students constituting the sample for the present study have shown preference for certain LSs more than others. Their preference of five LSs has not been so different. Only one LS, viz. "Exposing Self to Learning Situations" through its two sub-styles "Extrovert" and "Introvert" has been the least preferred LS by the sample of students.

2. Concerning the sample of students' preference of the six LSs incorporated in the questionnaire in terms of gender, male and female EFL students have shown a significant

difference in the use of just one LS, namely "Approaching Tasks" for the benefit of female students.

3. With regard to the sample of EFL students' preference of the sub-styles that belong to the main LSs, again in terms of gender, there are differences between students' preference of the sub-style "Extroverted" belonging to the main LSs "Exposing Self to Learning Situations" and the sub-style "Global, i.e. independent" belonging to the main LS "Dealing with Input", for the benefit of male students. While the difference in EFL students preference of the sub-style "Closure, i.e. Oriented" belonging to the main LS "Approaching Tasks" is in favour of female EFL students.

B. Recommendations:

In the light of the results arrived at and the conclusions drawn upon, the current research recommends the following:

1. Teachers should consider their students' LSs and enhance such styles since students' good achievement is usually determined by the effective handling of such styles by both teachers and students.

2. Since students learn and approach learning tasks in different ways, teachers' understanding, identification, and working on the diversity of their students LSs would give them a better opportunity to meet their students diverse learning needs.

3. Since students' LSs are prone to change due to the fact that different LSs plays a key role in student's academic achievement, teachers should influence student's achievement by using different ways of presenting the information.

4. Since students learn in different ways and since an LS that is preferred by one student may not be workable with the learning of another, modification of teaching styles on the part of teachers in their dealing with students can lead to

better achievement by different learners who have different LSs.

5. Since LSs are of a vital role in any learning situation and at all educational levels, educational authorities should identify learners' LSs at the beginning of the studying year. Such an identification can help teachers select the right and effective techniques that best suit the prevalent LSs. This is added to the fact that if teachers match their teaching methods with the students' learning styles, the students will be more successful and more interested in the language they are learning.

6. Since a combination of LSs has been preferred by EFL university students, a parallel combination of activities should be involved in the EFL classroom to help students manage the varied linguistic tasks in a better way.

7. Training courses for EFL teachers should enable participants to expand   and vary their teaching styles on one hand, and know better about EFL students LSs on the other hand. This is so because the more teachers understand the differences in students' preferences, the better chances they can have to meet students diverse learning needs.

8. There should be variety in the materials incorporated in the EFL   classroom so as to cater for students' diverse LSs.

C. Suggestions for Further Research:

As a final point of departure and to attain more research findings on this subject, there are other points which need investigation, and as follows:

1. Investigating the relationship between EFL students LSs and their achievement.

2. Investigating EFL students LSs in terms of students' ethnicity, parents' educational attainment, native language, cultural diversity, etc.

3.   Investigating EFL Students' LSs in terms of their implications for teaching.

4. Investigating EFL Students' LSs and their implications for the design of instructional materials.

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Appendix (1)
List of Jury Members of the Questionnaire

		Name	Academic Status	Specialization
	College of Arts / University of Mosul			
1.		Dr. Bassim Yahya Jassim	Prof.	Applied Linguistics
	College of Basic Education / University of Mosul			
1.		Dr. Wayis J. Ibrahim	Asst. Prof.	Applied Linguistics
2.		Dr. Esam Ahmed Abdul-Raheem	Asst. Prof.	Applied Linguistics
3.		Dr. Ansam Ali Ismaeel	Asst. Prof.	Applied Linguistics

Appendix (2)

Dear Jury Member:

Name: ……………………………………….
Academic Status: ………………………..
Specialization ……………………………
Address: ………………………………….

I have the pleasure to benefit from your expertise and knowledge of teaching English as a foreign language. Would you please go through the items of the enclosed questionnaire and state your invaluable comments and remarks on their suitability to investigate the Learning Styles (LSs) of a sample of university students of EFL (English as a Foreign Language).
                              Thank you for your

cooperatio

                                        The

Researcher

Investigating EFL University Students' Learning Styles
Asst.Prof. Dr. Hussein Ali Ahmed

Learning Style	Learning Sub-styles	Fit	Unfit
(1) **Using Physical Senses**	**(1) <u>Visual</u>: Relying more on the sense of sight, and learning better through visual means (books, videos, charts, pictures)**		
	I remember better if I write linguistic materials down.		
	I understand better when materials are written on the board.		
	Charts, diagram ms and maps help me understand the linguistic materials better.		
	(2) <u>Auditory</u>: Preferring listening and speaking activities (discussions, debates, audio tapes, role-plays, lectures		
	I remember things better if I discuss them with someone.		
	I prefer to learn by listening rather than reading.		
	I like to listen to music when I study		
(2) **Exposing Self To Learning Situations**	**(1) <u>Extroverted</u>: Enjoying a wide range of social, interactive learning talks (games, conversations, discussions, debates, role-plays, simulations).**		
	I learn better when I work or study with others than by myself.		
	I meet new people easily by jumping into the conversation.		
	It is easy for me to approach strangers.		
	(2) <u>Introverted</u>: Enjoying to do more independent work (studying or reading alone or learning with the computer) or enjoy working with one other person you know well.		
	I am energized by the inner world (what I'm thinking inside).		
	I prefer individual or one-to-one games and activities.		
	When I am in a large group, I tend to keep silent and just listen.		
	(1) <u>Random = Intuitive</u>: Being future-oriented, preferring to speculate about possibilities, enjoying abstract thinking, and avoiding step-by-		

(3) **Handling Possibilities**	step instruction.		
	I have a creative imagination.		
	I add many original ideas during class discussions.		
	I am open-minded to new suggestions from my peers. أنا		
	(2) <u>Concrete = Sequential</u>: Being present-oriented, preferring one-step-at-a time activities, wanting to know where you are going in your learning at every moment.		
	I need instructions before doing any activity.		
	I trust concrete facts rather than new, untested ideas		
	I prefer materials presented in a step-by-step way.		
(4) **Approaching Tasks**	**(1) <u>Closure-Oriented</u>:** Focusing carefully on all learning tasks, meeting deadlines, planning ahead for assignments, and wanting explicit directions.		
	My notes and other materials are carefully organized.		
	I write lists of everything I need to do each day.		
	I enjoy a sense of structure in the classroom.		
	(2) <u>Open</u>: Enjoying discovery learning (picking information naturally, preferring to relax and enjoy learning without concern for deadlines or rules.		
	I gather lots of information, and then I make last minute decisions.		
	I prefer fun or open activities rather than structured activities.		
	My schedule is flexible for changes.		
(5) **Dealing with Ideas**	**(1) <u>Synthesizing</u>:** Summarizing material well, enjoying guessing meanings and predicting Outcomes, noticing similarities quickly.		
	I can summarize information easily.		
	I enjoy tasks where I have to put together ideas to form one large idea.		
	By looking at the whole situation, I can easily understand someone.		

	(2) <u>Analytic:</u> Planning ideas a part, doing well on logical analysis and contrasting tasks, tending to focus on grammar rules.		
	I prefer to focus on grammar rules.		
	I enjoy activities where I have to compare or contrast two things.		
	I am good at solving complicated mysteries and puzzles.		
(6) **Dealing with Input**	**(1) <u>Global = Independent</u>: Enjoying getting the main idea, feeling comfortable while communicating though not knowing all the words or concepts.**		
	It is easy for me to see the overall plan or big picture.		
	I get the main idea, and that is enough for me.		
	When I report something, I tend to forget about lots of specific details.		
	(2) <u>Particular = Dependent</u>: Focusing more on details, remembering specific information about a topic well.		
	I need very specific examples in order to understand fully.		
	I can easily break down big ideas into their smaller parts.		
	I pay attention to specific facts or information.		

APPENDIX (3)

Dear Student

The Present researcher is investigating your Learning Styles in learning English as a foreign language. Would you please state your frank and sincere answers to the items of the enclosed questionnaire by ticking (∕) in the square that best applies to you. There is no need to mention your name. Answers will be used for research purposes only.

	Male	
Gender	**Female**	

Thank you for your cooperation

The Researcher

Learning Styles	I ……… use this learning style				
	Never	Rarely	Some-times	Often	Always
1. I remember better if I write linguistic materials down.					
2. I understand better when materials are written on the board.					
harts, diagrams and maps help me understand the linguistic materials better.					
4. I remember things better if I discuss them with someone.					
5. I prefer to learn by listening rather than reading.					
6. I like to listen to music when I study					
7. I learn better when I work or study with others than by myself.					
8. I meet new people easily by jumping into the conversation.					
9. It is easy for me to approach strangers.					
10. I am energized by the inner world (what I'm thinking inside).					
11. I prefer individual or one-to-one games and activities.					
12. When I am in a large group, I tend to keep silent and just listen.					

	Never	Rarely	Some-times	Often	Always
13. I have a creative imagination.					
14. I add many original ideas during class discussions.					
15. I am open-minded to new suggestions from my peers.					
16. I need instructions before doing any activity.					
17. I trust concrete facts rather than new, untested ideas.					
18. I prefer materials presented in a step-by-step way.					
Learning Styles	**I ……….. use this learning style**				
	Never	Rarely	Some-times	Often	Always
19. My notes and other materials are carefully organized.					
20. I write lists of everything I need to do each day.					
21. I enjoy a sense of structure in the classroom.					
22. I gather lots of information, and then I make last minute decisions.					
23. I prefer fun or open activities rather than structured activities.					
24. My schedule is flexible for changes.					
25. I can summarize information easily.					
26. I enjoy tasks where I have to put together ideas to form one large idea.					
27. By looking at the whole situation, I can easily understand someone.					
28. I prefer to focus on grammar rules.					
29. I enjoy activities where I have to compare or contrast two things.					
30. I am good at solving complicated mysteries and puzzles.					
31. It is easy for me to see the overall plan or big picture.					

32. I get the main idea, and that is enough for me.					
33. When I report something, I tend to forget about lots of specific details.					
34. I need very specific examples in order to understand fully.					
35. I can easily break down big ideas into their smaller parts.					
36. I pay attention to specific facts or information.					

تقصّي أساليب التعلُم لدى طلبة الجامعة المختصين في اللغة الإنكليزية

أ.م.د.حسين علي أحمد

المستخلص

هناك جملة عوامل تكتنف عملية تعلم أية لغة أجنبية. ويقال عن هذه العوامل أنّها تؤثر على أداء المتعلمين وتحدد الطرق المختلفة التي يتبناها المتعلمون للغة الجديدة. يتمثَّل أحد هذه العوامل بوسائل التعلُم والتي تعد واسعة الانتشار في مجال التربية عموما ومجال تعليم وتعلُم اللغات الأجنبية بشكل خاص. تشير وسائل التعلُم إلى الطرق المختلفة التي يستعين بها المتعلمون في اكتساب و حفظ واستعادة المعلومات الخاصة باللغة . وعلية يهدف البحث الحالي إلى تحديد مستويات تفضيل طلبة الجامعة المتخصصين في اللغة الإنكليزية لوسائل التعلُم المختلفة من خلال الافتراض (١) عدم وجود فوارق بين طلبة الجامعة المتخصصين في اللغة الإنكليزية من الذكور والإناث فيما يتعلَّق بتفضيلهم لوسائل التعلُم

المختلفة، و(٢) عدم وجود فوارق بين طلبة الجامعة المتخصصين في اللغة الإنكليزية من الذكور والإناث فيما يتعلق بتفضيلهم لأساليب تعلُم معينة رئيسة أو ثانوية دون أخرى. ولتحقيق أهداف البحث والتحقق من فرضياته تم توزيع أستبانة تضم فقرات تمثِل أساليب التعلُم المختلفة على عينة من الطلبة المذكورين في أعلاه. أظهرت النتائج (١) عدم وجود فوارق ذات دلالة بين طلبة الجامعة المتخصصين في اللغة الإنكليزية فيما يتعلق بتفضيلهم لأغلب أساليب التعلّم، باستثناء أسلوب واحد و (٢) عدم وجود فوارق ذات دلالة بين تفضيل الطلبة الذكور والإناث لأكثر أساليب التعلُم الرئيسة بأستثناء ١ من بين ٦، وكذلك أساليب التعلُم الثانوية باستثناء ٣ من بين ١٢. ينتهي البحث ببعض الاستنتاجات والتوصيات والمقترحات لدراسات مستقبلية.