A STUDY OF LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES AND STYLES OF FIRST YEAR COLLEGE STUDENTS AT SULU STATE COLLEGE

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Abstract: **This descriptive-correlational study assesses the extent of language learning styles of college students at Sulu Stat College during the Academic Year 2022-2023. With 100 respondents, it employed frequency counts and percentage, weighted mean and standard deviation, t-test for independent samples and One-way ANOVA, and Pearson's r. This study reveals the following findings: 1) Out of 100 respondents, great majority are female, are within 21 years old & below of age bracket, mostly from Arts and Sciences and Business Administration departments, and whose parents have high school level of education. 2) Generally, student-respondents agreed that language learning styles of college students at Sulu State College could possibly be as Visual Language, Auditory Numerical, Social Group, Visual Numerical, Kinesthetic-Tactile, Expressive Oral, Auditory Language, Social Individual, and Expressive–Written. 3) Generally, profile variables such as gender, age, and parent's educational attainment do not intervene in ways how student-respondents assess the extent of language learning styles. 4) Student-respondents who generally perceived the extent of language learning styles in terms of Visual Language as "Strongly Agree" may sometimes be the same group of respondents who perceived the extent of Auditory Numerical, Social Group, Visual Numerical, Kinesthetic-Tactile, Expressive Oral, Auditory Language, Social Individual, and Expressive–Written as "Agree", respectively. 5) This study tends to support Mkonto (2010) model of language learning styles which accounts that in the writing activity the participants will write about their prior learning experiences and how these experiences help or hinder effective learning.**

Keywords: **visual, auditory, kinesthetic, tactile, group, individual, auditory, gender, age, course.**

I. INTRODUCTION

Currently, in higher education institutions, there is a pervasive yet important awareness of learning styles that help students understand and develop their own learning. Gilakjani (2012 in Mkonto, 2015) maintains that students need a starting place for thinking about and understanding how they learn. This will allow students to become more independent as learners and play an active role in their own learning. (Genovese, 2004; Gilakjani 2012 in Mkonto 2015).

Over the last twenty years, there has been growing interest in incorporating a focus on learning strategies and learning how-to-learn into language curricula. There is a general belief that such a focus helps students become more effective learners and facilitates the activation of a learner –centered philosophy (Nunan, 1988 in Silitunga et.al 2020) It is also believed that learners who have developed skills in learning how-to-learn will be better able to exploit classroom learning opportunities effectively, and will be more adequately equipped to continue with language learning outside of the classroom.

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Among learners' individual differences, learning styles and learning strategies are the variables which relate to learners' performance while learning. Besides, an awareness of learners' learning styles influences effective learning strategies used to facilitate language learning (Hilles & Sutton, 2001 in Panrod 2017).

Student's learning styles are among the acquired factors. Based on their individual differences, different students use different learning styles for their learning. Today, all theory-markers believe that individuals understand, organize, analyze, and process information and experiences in different ways. Despite all the different theories and models available in the field of learning styles. Learning styles are different between the two Learning styles are seen as characteristic cognitive, affective, and psychological behaviors that serve as relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive, interact with, and respond to the learning environment. The concept of learning styles has been applied to a wide variety of student attributes and differences (Felder and Brent, 2005 in Rezaeinejjad 2015). Learning style refers to an individual's habitual and preferred way of absorbing, processing and retaining new information and skills. According to Capretz (2006 in Rezaeinejad 2015) each learning style has its own strengths and weaknesses and therefore a person who sticks to one style is never going to be an ideal learner (Moradkhan and Mirtaheri, 2011 in Rezaeinejad 2015). Language learning styles have attracted a great deal of attention and have been the focus of a number of L2 studies since Reid's influential work in 1987.(Reid 1995 in Mkonto 2015) categorized the learning styles into three major categories: sensory or perceptual learning style, cognitive learning style, and affective/temperament learning style. Sensory or perceptual learning style lends itself to the physical environment in which we learn, and involves using our senses in order to perceive data. Reid categorized perceptual learning styles into six major types: Visual (visual learners prefer seeing things in writing), Auditory (these learners learn best when they listen), Kinesthetic (these learners prefer active participation), Tactile (these learners prefer hands-on work), and Group (these learners like to participate in group activities), and Individual (these learners learn best when they are alone). There is evidence that shows woman's learning style depends more on sympathy, collaboration and careful listening (Grasha, 1996 in Rezaeinejad 2015)

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study determined the language learning styles among first year college students at Sulu State College during the school year 2022-2023.

HYPOTHESES

The following hypothesis is posited in this study as its guide in gathering the data to answer the research problems:

1. There is no significant difference in the language learning styles of first year college students at Sulu State College when data are grouped according to gender, age, course and parent's educational attainment.

2. There is no significant difference in the correlation of the sub categories subsumed under language learning styles of first year college students at Sulu State College.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

To determine the language learning styles among first year college students at Sulu State College during the school year 2022-2023, this study endeavoured to meet the following objectives:

1. To determine the socio demographic profile of first year college students at Sulu State College in terms of the following categories; gender, age, course, and parent's educational attainment;

2. To determine the extent of language learning style of first year college students at Sulu State College on each of the following categories: visual language, auditory numerical, social group, visual numerical, kinaesthetic, expressive oral, auditory language, social individual, expressive written;

3. To determine the significant difference in the extent of the language learning styles of the first year college students when data are grouped according to: gender, age, course, and parents' educational attainment;

4. To determine the significant correlation among the sub-categories subsumed under language learning styles of the first year college students at Sulu State College.

THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on the following models and theories:

The innovative learning experience ILE was adapted from Centre of Innovative Teaching Experience (C .I.T.E.) by Mkonto (2010).

The ILE was further adopted by Mkonto (2010) from the C.I.T.E instrument and consisted of a writing activity and a questionnaire (Mkonto 2010).

In the writing activity the participants will write about their prior learning experiences and how these experiences help or hinder effective learning; the questionnaire will help the participants to identify preferred learning styles. The learning styles are categorized into the following:

1. Visual language –The students learn best **seeing** the information presented to them.

2. Auditory numerical –The students learn best from **hearing numbers.**

3. Social group –The students learn best **when in a group**.

4. Visual numerical –The students learn best by **seeing numbers.**

5. Kinaesthetic tactile – The students learn best by **being involved**.

6. Expressive oral – The students learn best when they **can express themselves in written form**

7. Auditory Language- The students learn best from **hearing information presented to them.**

8. Social individual – The students like **to study alone.**

9. Expressive written – The students learn best when they **express themselves in written form**

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Based on (Mkonto, 2010) Innovative Learning Experience (ILE) was adapted from Centre for Innovative Teaching Experience (C.I.T.E) that consists of a writing activity and a questionnaire.

Students demographic profiles are to be treated as the independent variables while the assessment on the language learning style are to be treated as dependent variable. Hence the interplay of variables is illustrated in figure 1 below.
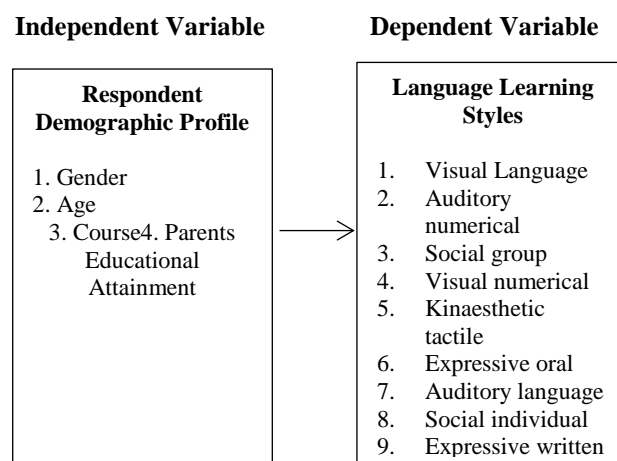

Independent Variable   **Dependent Variable**

Respondent Demographic Profile

1. Gender
2. Age
   3. Course4. Parents Educational Attainment

Language Learning Styles

1.   Visual Language
2.   Auditory numerical
3.   Social group
4.   Visual numerical
5.   Kinaesthetic tactile
6.   Expressive oral
7.   Auditory language
8.   Social individual
9.   Expressive written

Figure 1. Conceptual model of the study

Significance of the study

The investigation of Language learning styles among first year college students at Sulu State College gives significant contribution to the following groups of people:

1. College officials- This study will provide informative data on the language learning styles of the college students particularly this will help the curriculum developers/experts in developing curricula that meet the needs of the learners at Sulu State College.

2. English language instructor – The findings of this study provide measures for English instructors that improve their classroom methodology and the learning process as a whole.

3. Researchers in English Language Learning Styles – The findings of this empirical research will become valuable references and resources for other researches and scholars in the field. It will build a scientific foundation for further avenues related to this field.

Operational Definition of Terms

1. Gender – refers to the state of being male or female.

2. Course – refers to the baccalaureate degree of the respondents which are the following: Bachelor of Science in Agriculture, Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, Bachelor of Science in Computer Science, Bachelor of Science in Information Technology, Bachelor of Science in Engineering, Bachelor of Elementary Education, Bachelor of Secondary Education, and Bachelor of Science in Nursing

3. Parents' Educational Attainment – level of school that the parent's respondents have attained. In this study it is refers to the highest classified into four brackets: a) elementary level; b) secondary level; c) college/tertiary level; and d) post graduate level

4. Language Learning Styles - Learning style refers to an individual's habitual and preferred way of absorbing, processing and retaining new information and skills. According to (Capretz 2006 in Mkonto 2015)

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND STUDIES

It is a fact that knowledge of the learning styles will increase academic success. Awareness of learning styles help students understand how they learn and take ownership of their learning so that they succeed in the institutions of higher education (Mkonto 2015).

The term learning styles refers to the view that different people learn information in different ways. In recent decades, the concept of learning styles has steadily gained influence. In this article, we describe the intense interest and discussion that the concept of learning styles has elicited among professional educators at all levels of the educational system. Moreover, the learning-styles concept appears to have wide acceptance not only among educators but also among parents and the general public. This acceptance is perhaps not surprising because the learning-styles idea is actively promoted by vendors offering many different tests, assessment devices, and online technologies to help educators identify their students' learning styles and adapt their instructional approaches.

Learning style is the way in which each learner begins to concentrate on, process, absorb, and retain new and difficult information (Dunn and Dunn, 1992; 1993; 1999 in Mkonto 2015). The interaction of these elements occurs differently in everyone. Therefore, it is necessary to determine what is most likely to trigger each student's concentration, how to maintain it, and how to respond to his or her natural processing style to produce long term memory and retention. To reveal these natural tendencies and styles, it is important to use a comprehensive model of learning style that identifies each individual's strengths and preferences across the full spectrum of physiological, sociological, psychological, emotional and environmental.

(Chamot and Kupper 1989; O'Malley and Chamot 1990 in Tee Shu Min et.al 2021), they described language learning strategies as precise thoughts and activities that maximize the learning process and comprehension of new input and information. These methods become a valuable toolkit for active, aware, and purposeful self-regulation of learning when the learner actively picks techniques that fit his or her learning style and the second language task at hand. It is also crucial to recognize that individual students' learning styles and strategies can complement or clash with a specific educational methodology (Oxford, 2003 in Tee Shu Min et al 2021). This has further been supported by Hashim et al (2018) that learners must be able to recognize their individual learning styles and preferences in order to determine which language learning strategies are best for them, so that the methods can become habits and eventually turn them into good language learners. Learning style theories have not been scientifically demonstrated (Rogowsky et al., 2015), but many L2 teachers believe in them. Similarly, a multitude of L2-educators also believe that learners are right-brained or left-brained and try to improve their teaching to selectively activate the right hemisphere (Lindell, 2006; Lindell and Kidd, 2011 in Macedonia 2015). In

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both cases, we have to do with pseudoscience: It is appealing because simple, but unfortunate because as such it impacts education in a misleading way. In our time, we do have knowledge on learning processes and this knowledge should flow into L2 practice. Therefore, a basic education in cognitive neuroscience would prevent L2 teachers from becoming a soft target for pseudoscientific theories.

One of the most important uses of learning styles is that it makes it easy for teachers to incorporate them into their teaching. There are different learning styles. Three of the most popular ones are visual, auditory, and kinesthetic in which students take in information. Some students are visual learners, while others are auditory or kinesthetic learners. While students use all of their senses to take in information, they seem to have preferences in how they learn best. In order to help students learn, teachers need to teach as many of these preferences as possible. Teachers can incorporate these learning styles in their curriculum activities so that students are able to succeed in their classes. This study is an analysis of learning styles for Iranian EFL university students. Over 100 students completed a questionnaire to determine if their learning styles are auditory, visual or kinesthetic. The finding showed that Iranian EFL university students preferred learning style was visual. The purpose of this study is to increase faculty awareness and understanding of the effect of learning styles on the teaching process. A review of the literature will determine how learning styles affect the teaching process (Abbas Pourhossein Gilakjani, 2015)

LEARNING STYLES PREFERENCES MODEL

- **Visual:** learn well from seeing.

- **Auditory**: learn well from hearing.

- **Kinesthetic:** learn well by experience and being involved physically in classroom experiences.

- **Tactile**: learn well from doing hands-on experiences.

- **Group:** learn well when studying with at least one other student

- **Individual**: learn well when working alone.

Learning strategies

Learning strategies are defined as mental steps or learning processes which are selected consciously to learn a new language or to take actions to improve second language learning (Cohen, 1990; Wenden, 1991 in SIlitonga 2020). Learning strategies are classified differently, such as direct and indirect strategies, and cognitive and self-management strategies (Wenden, 1991 in Silitonga et al 2020). However, the well-known classification which is proposed by O'Malley and Chamot (1990 in Silitonga et.al 2020) was used as the basis of the study. They divided learning strategies into three categories which consist of the following;

- **Metacognitive strategies** involving higher order executive skills,

- **Cognitive strategies** concerning direct operation on incoming information, and

- **Social/ affective strategies** relating to interaction with others.

III. METHODS

This chapter deals with the research method used in the conduct of this study. It deals with the research design, locale, and respondents of the study, sampling design, and data gathering procedure, research instrument and statistical treatment of data.

Research Design

This study adopted the descriptive method. Descriptive method is a scientific method that aims of unraveling facts of what actually exerts such as current condition, practices or phenomena. Practically the researcher aims to draw information base on the responses of the first year college students at Sulu State College. The sources of information are from library and internet resources to enrich the theoretical and conceptual frameworks of this research.

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Research Locale

This study was conducted at Sulu State College among first year college students during the school year 2022-2023. Sulu State College is situated in Jolo the capital town of Sulu.

Respondents of the Study

The respondents of this study were one hundred (100) randomly selected first year college students at Sulu State College, Jolo, Sulu. Specifically, respondents were from different academic departments namely: School of Agriculture, School of Arts and Sciences, School of Business Administration, School of Computer Science and Engineering, School of Education and School of Nursing

Sampling Design

A non–probability random sampling method through purposive sampling procedure was employed in this study. Representative from School of Agriculture, School of Arts and Sciences, School of Business Administration, School of Computer Science and Engineering, School of Education, School of Nursing were chosen as respondents of the study. The use of purposive sampling is to ensure the collection of desired quality and quantity of data that will be collected in this study.

Data Gathering Procedure

In the collection of data the study employed the following steps:

1. A permit to administer the questionnaire was sought from the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies of the Sulu State College and then from the office of the college President as well as from the deans of the six academic departments; and

2. The launching and administering as well as the retrieval of the questionnaire was conducted personally by the researcher.

Research Instrument

A self-made questionnaire on the demographic profile of the respondents was used and the instrument on the learning style assessment was patterned and adapted from the Innovative Learning Experience (ILE) (Mkonto, 2010). The ILE was adapted from Centre for Innovative Teaching Experience (C.I.T.E) by Mkonto (2010).

Validity and Reliability

The instrument used in this research was patterned and adapted from Mkonto (2010) questionnaire on college students' language learning styles. This standardized questionnaire was already used in Mkonto (2010) study, thus its validity and reliability are already established. However, to suit its applicability to the present study, this was subjected for perusal of at least two experts from among the faculty members of the School of Graduate Studies, Sulu State College.

Statistical Treatment

Both descriptive and inferential statistical tools were employed in the treatments of data gathered in this study, namely:

1. Mean, percentage and standard deviation were employed to determine the following: socio demographic profile of the students in terms of gender, age, course and parents' educational attainment and Language learning styles.

2. T-test for independent samples to determine the significant differences in learning styles of the students when data are group according to gender and age.

3. One- way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was employed to determine the significant difference in learning styles of the students when data are group according to course and parents' educational attainment.

4. Pearson r was used for determining the significant difference of the sub categories subsumed under the language learning styles of students at Sulu State College.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter deals with the presentations, analyses and interpretations of results based on the data gathered for this study. Specifically, it presents the extent of determine the language learning styles among first year college students at Sulu State College during the Academic Year 2022-2023. It also deals with respondent's demographic profiles in terms of gender, age, course, and parent's educational attainment; the extent of language learning styles visual language, auditory numerical, social group, visual numerical, kinesthetic-tactile, expressive oral, auditory language, social individual, and expressive–

written; and the significant correlation and differences in these sub-categories when data are classified according to respondents' demographic profiles.

On Visual Language: It shows that the group of Arts & Sciences students obtained the mean difference of .49487* with Standard Error of .10999 and p-value of .000 which is significant at alpha=.05 over the group of CSITE students. So under this sub-category, no other groups of respondents supposed to have better ways of assessing the extent of language learning styles in terms of Visual Language than those students enrolled in Arts & Sciences department.

On Auditory Numerical: It shows that the group of Arts & Sciences students obtained the mean difference of .64615* with Standard Error of .21743 and p-value of .042 which is significant at alpha=.05 over the group of Nursing students. So under this sub-category, no other groups of respondents supposed to have better ways of assessing the extent of language learning styles in terms of Auditory Numerical than those students enrolled in Arts & Sciences department.

On Visual Numerical: It shows that the group of Arts & Sciences students obtained the mean difference of .45726* with Standard Error of .13283 and p-value of .011 which is significant at alpha=.05 over the group of Business Administration students. So under this sub-category, no other groups of respondents supposed to have better ways of assessing the extent of language learning styles in terms of Visual Numerical than those students enrolled in Arts & Sciences department.

On Expressive Oral: It shows that the group of Arts & Sciences students obtained the mean difference of .53333* with Standard Error of .16765 and p-value of .024 which is significant at alpha=.05 over the group of Nursing students. So under this sub-category, no other groups of respondents supposed to have better ways of assessing the extent of language learning styles in terms of Expressive Oral than those students enrolled in Arts & Sciences department.

On Expressive Oral: It shows that the group of Arts & Sciences students obtained the mean difference of .53333* with Standard Error of .16765 and p-value of .024 which is significant at alpha=.05 over the group of Nursing students. So under this sub-category, no other groups of respondents supposed to have better ways of assessing the extent of language learning styles in terms of Expressive Oral than those students enrolled in Arts & Sciences department.

On Auditory Language: It shows that the group of Arts & Sciences students obtained the mean difference of .41346* with Standard Error of .11036 and p-value of .004 which is significant at alpha=.05 over the group of Business Administration students. So under this sub-category, no other groups of respondents supposed to have better ways of assessing the extent of language learning styles in terms of Auditory Language than those students enrolled in Arts & Sciences department.

On Social Individual: It shows that the group of Arts & Sciences students obtained the mean difference of .45299* with Standard Error of .13089 and p-value of .010 which is significant at alpha=.05 over the group of Business Administration students. So under this sub-category, no other groups of respondents supposed to have better ways of assessing the extent of language learning styles in terms of Social Individual than those students enrolled in Arts & Sciences department.

On Expressive-Written: It shows that the group of Arts & Sciences students obtained the mean difference of .47692* with Standard Error of .15914 and p-value of .040 which is significant at alpha=.05 over the group of Nursing students. So under this sub-category, no other groups of respondents supposed to have better ways of assessing the extent of language learning styles in terms of Expressive Individual than those students enrolled in Arts & Sciences department.

V. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents the summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations based on the data collected that were properly tabulated, computed and analyzed for this study.

Summary of Findings:

The following are findings of this study:

1)On demographic profile of respondents;

Out of the 100 student-respondents, great majority are female, are within 21 years old & below of age bracket, mostly from Arts and Sciences and Business Administration departments, and whose parents have high school level of education.

2) On the extent of language learning styles;

Sub-categories under the extent of language learning styles of college students at Sulu State College such as Visual Language, Auditory Numerical, Social Group, Visual Numerical, Kinesthetic-Tactile, Expressive Oral, Auditory Language, Social Individual, and Expressive–Written are all rated as "Agree" which implies that these learning styles are highly employed by students in learning English language.

3) On differences in the extent of language learning styles;

Except by Course, generally there is no significant difference in the extent of language learning styles of college students at Sulu State College when data are grouped according to gender, age, and parent's educational attainment. Students from Arts and Sciences are better perceiver of the extent of language learning styles.

4) On correlation among the sub-categories subsumed under the extent of language learning styles;

Generally**,** there is a low positive correlation among the sub-categories subsumed under the extent of language learning styles. Respondents who generally perceived the extent of language learning styles in terms of Visual Language as "Strongly Agree" may sometimes be the same group of respondents who perceived the extent of Auditory Numerical, Social Group, Visual Numerical, Kinesthetic-Tactile, Expressive Oral, Auditory Language, Social Individual, and Expressive – Written as "Agree", respectively.

Conclusions:

This study concludes the following:

1) In this study, student-respondents are adequately represented in terms of gender, age, course, and parent's educational attainment.

2) Generally, student-respondents agreed that language learning styles of college students at Sulu State College could possibly be as Visual Language, Auditory Numerical, Social Group, Visual Numerical, Kinesthetic-Tactile, Expressive Oral, Auditory Language, Social Individual, and Expressive–Written.

3) Generally, profile variables such as gender, age, and parent's educational attainment do not intervene in ways how student-respondents assess the extent of language learning styles.

4) Student-respondents who generally perceived the extent of language learning styles in terms of Visual Language as "Strongly Agree" may sometimes be the same group of respondents who perceived the extent of Auditory Numerical, Social Group, Visual Numerical, Kinesthetic-Tactile, Expressive Oral, Auditory Language, Social Individual, and Expressive–Written as "Agree", respectively.

5) This study tends to support Mkonto (2010) model of language learning styles which accounts that in the writing activity the participants will write about their prior learning experiences and how these experiences help or hinder effective learning.

Recommendations:

This study recommends the following:

1) To ensure efficient delivery of teaching approaches, methods, and procedures, academic leaders should sustain the implementation of programs and policies that cater to the professional development of teachers in terms of pedagogical knowledge and skills.

2) College instructors should continue upgrading their educational qualification by pursuing graduate studies in their field of specialization.

3) Moreover, student-researchers in the field of language teaching English encouraged to conduct study similar to this one but to include other variables such as language learning anxiety, language learning attitudes, language learning strategies, and language teachers' morale in some other settings.

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