A Match or Mismatch between Learning and Teaching Styles in English First Additional Language Classrooms

Ntombekhaya Princess Caga

School of Further and Continuing Education, University of Fort Hare, South Africa

ABSTRACT The purpose of this paper is to examine the preferred learning styles used by Grade 8 English First Additional Language (EFAL) learners and the teaching styles preferred by their teachers. The main aim of this paper is to discover whether the teaching styles used by the teachers match or mismatch the learners' learning styles, and how knowledge of these learning styles may help teachers select teaching styles that blend the best practices in EFAL learning. The study made use of Classroom Work Style survey, interviews and observation schedule as the tool for data collection. The findings revealed that visual and the compound learning styles were more prevalent among learners, and their teachers adopted mainly teacher -centred approach. This paper, therefore, recommends the teaching and learning style congruency.

INTRODUCTION

Quality teaching and learning has been a hot discourse in South Africa since the emergence of the democratic dispensation in 1994 the same has been the case in the entire universe. Hence, the South African EFAL curriculum aims, among other things, to provide teachers with a degree of freedom to select the teaching styles through which almost all the learners would achieve the expected outcomes. EFAL is a South African term referring to second language. In the context of the Department of Education and Alice District where the research was conducted, the term 'First Additional Language' is used. In this study, both terms will be used as most of the literature reviewed use the term 'Second Language' (L2). It is believed that when the teacher wants to promote greater teacher effectiveness, self-awareness should be the starting point, and then follows the understanding of learners' learning style preferences. This belief then leads to the assumption that teachers' recognition and understanding of their own teaching styles can help them use teaching techniques better-suited to their learners. Furthermore, matching their learners' learning styles to their teaching styles enhance learning. It is believed that to identify learners' learning styles and teachers' teaching styles requires a deliberate and concerted effort.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

This paper was guided by constructivist theory which focus mainly on learners learning and the quest for new knowledge. According to Foncha (2013) leaners learn best when they are actively engaged in their learning, making meaning from their experiences. Linake and Foncha (2015) support the constructivists by highlighting that learners need guidance and support from their teachers when working on activities. Therefore, matching teaching style with learning style is considered as the best practice. The intended outcome is for the learners to become competent and independent at a later stage.

Learning Style

The learning style is an individuals' preferred way of learning. Abu-Asba and Hazita (2014) affirm this by highlighting that a person has his preferred way of acquiring and processing information. It is assumed that learners learn best when the teacher transmit the information in their preferred learning style. According to Dekker et al. (2012), the learning styles are categorised according to the type of information the learner perceives. This paper only focuses on four categories of learning styles; namely, the perceptual style, the cognitive, the personality, and the com-

pound learning style. The perceptual learning style category is divided in terms of the sensory channel through which the information is most effectively perceived. This category consists of five styles based on the five senses, namely: visual; auditory; verbal or linguistic; tactile, and the kinesthetic learning styles. The sense of smell, and taste, are grouped with kinesthetic, since they all involve an action. According to Dreher (1997) the cognitive learning style is identified in terms of how the learner progresses toward understanding of the information presented. In this category, there are learners who prefer to be reflective and concrete during the language learning process. They are referred to as divergers. There are also assimilators who are reflective and abstract in their learning. There are also convergers, who are more active than reflective, and more abstract than concrete. The last type of learners is the accommodators, who are more active than reflective and more concrete than abstract during English language learning. Learners with more than one learning style preference fall under compound learning style category. The most common combination of learning styles are convergers - divergers, assimilators- accommodators, divergers-accommodators, and so on. The personal learning style is identified in terms of the organisation of information which the learner is most comfortable with, or how the learner prefers to process the information. These learning styles are grouped in terms of learner's personality, such as reflective and impulsive. In language learning, the reflective learners prefer accuracy to fluency, whereas impulsive learners prefer fluency to accuracy. The compound learning style category accommodates learners with more than one learning style preference. The learners' understanding of his own learning style makes him understand his capabilities better. It also becomes an eye- opener to the teaching styles that suits him best. Teachers who understand their learners' learning styles can construct classrooms that offer varied types of teaching styles and evaluation, and be able to provide all the learners with an environment that will afford them with the best opportunity towards success.

Teaching Style

Generally, the teaching style refers to the way in which the teacher transmits information

to the learners. It is believed that the teacher's choice of teaching style is based on his beliefs about what constitutes good teaching. According to Artvinli (2010) the success of teaching and learning process is shaped by teaching styles. Gilakjani (2012) supports this view by highlighting that the teachers' lack of knowledge about the selection and good use of teaching styles may contribute to learners' negative attitude toward learning. Although most teachers have a dominant preferred teaching style, the use of various teaching styles may be very effective. In this regard, Wubbels et al. (2015) argue that the use of various teaching styles by teachers is what makes them differ from each other. They further explain that teachers who use different teaching styles in his classroom are able to establish warm and supportive relationships with their learners.

There are teachers who prefer learner-centred approach in presenting information to their learners, viewing their role as mostly a facilitator of the learners' learning. This approach is prescribed in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (DoE 2011). It is believed that the learner-centred approach results in a more communicative classroom. In view of this, Liu (2014: 65) says that a more communicative classroom eliminates the weariness of learning and improves the actual teaching effect through mobilizing the learners' thought regular in an active state. In a communicative classroom learners are engaged in more task-based activities that help them focus on the particular aspect targeted by the activity. It combines the best of grammar-centred classrooms with more communicative ones. There are also teachers who prefer the teacher-centred approach (lecture method). In this approach the learners are passive and teachers are dominating most of the time.

Heimlich (1990) categorize teachers' teaching style into two domains, the sensitivity and inclusion domain. The first domain is based on the ability of the teacher to get a better understanding of the characteristics of learners. The latter, is based on the ability of the teacher to use teaching methods which caters for learners' characteristics. According to Heimlich, teachers with low inclusion and low sensitivity prefer lecture method of teaching. They are subject-oriented. Teachers with low inclusion and high sensitivity prefer learner-centered approach to teaching. They like to see learners working in groups

in their classrooms. Teachers with high inclusion and low sensitivity prefer teacher-centered approach to teaching. and they use the teaching method that is dictated by the subject matter. Teachers with high sensitivity and high inclusion are very learner-centered. They expose their learners to tasks that develop problem solving skills by posing challenging, open-ended problems.

Match or Mismatch of Learning Style with Teaching Style

Abu-Asba and Hazita (2014) point out that matching learning styles with teaching styles makes the learning and teaching environments meaningful and effective than learning in mismatched conditions. This implies that all learners are afforded an equal opportunity to become more active and reflective in their classrooms. Hsieh et al. (2011) say that when there is a teaching and learning style match, learners remember the information, retain it longer, and use it effectively. It is assumed that they are more likely to make progress in EFAL learning.

In such situation, they enjoy the learning experience more than other learners. In most scenarios, where learners' learning styles are similar to their teachers' teaching style, learners are viewed more favourably by those teachers. Conversely, learners with learning styles that are less similar to their teachers' teaching styles are more likely to be passive in class. Gilakjani (2012: 55) highlights that they start blaming themselves, loose interest in the subject, and become drop outs. Katowa-Mukwato et al. (2017: 85) argue that teachers' understanding of their learners' learning styles can reduce the level of dissatisfaction amongst learners. In addition, Shah et al. (2013) say that it can help teachers reach out to more learners. Galakjani (2012) affirms that teachers and learners' understanding about teaching and learning styles reduce clashes in the classroom. He further mentions that such clashes affect learners' learning potential and their attitudes toward learning. In this regard, teachers are faced with learners' bad performance in test, lack of discipline in class.

The study conducted by Abu-Asba and Hazita (2014) in Yemen University revealed that the lecturers adopted mainly lecturer-fronted teaching approach while the students preferred kinesthetic and tactile learning styles. The simi-lar study was conducted by Gilakjani (2012) at the Islamic Azad University of Lahijan in Iran. The findings showed that visual was the prevalent learning style among EFAL learners. Their lecturers preferred learner- centered approach. Scholars such as Katowa-Mukwato et al. (2017) among others believe that matching learning style with complementary teaching style help learners achieve the desired learning outcome.

METHODOLOGY

This paper is harvested from Caga's (2014) Masters dissertation that focuses on investigating the styles of learning English as First Additional Language by educationally-disadvantaged learners in two high schools in the Eastern Cape. The schools were selected to represent the broad spectrum of educationally-disadvantaged learners in rural areas in the Eastern Cape Province. The sample constituted of 110 Grade 8 EFAL learners and their two teachers who were purposively selected based on the fact that they were in their first year at senior secondary school, both participants' first language is IsiXhosa, and they were in educationally- disadvantaged schools in rural areas. The researchers obtained an ethical certificate from the Tshwane University and also sought consent from all the participants to make sure all codes of ethics were duly considered.

The tools for data collection were Classroom Work Style survey, semi-structured interviews, and classroom observation. Teachers were interviewed using semi structured questions to verify learners' responses. In addition to the interviews, the researcher conducted observations of the Grade 8 English teachers teaching learners, and the learners doing activities in their classrooms. The researcher used non-participant observation methods. She developed an observation schedule as a guide for what she needed to look at, and listened to in the classes. Consequently, the information gathered on learners' learning styles through the use of a Classroom Work Style survey, the detailed observations of the teaching styles used during lesson presentation, was used at the end, to build a picture of whether the teaching styles used matched (or not) the learners' learning styles. It is needful to stress that, this paper made use only of the Classroom Work Style survey because this particular

tool was the most informative and informed all the themes where the data was coded.

RESULTS

Learning Styles

Perceptual Learning Style

Table 1 shows that of 63 learners in school A, the visual learning style preference ranked first (57.1%), followed by auditory learning (23.8), kinesthetic learning (7.9), tactile learning (6.3%) while the responses to verbal learning (4.7) had the lowest scores. The mean is 39.6 and the standard deviation is 21.2. It is evident that learners who preferred auditory learning style were the dominating learning style (48.9%) in School B ; followed by the visual learning style (25.5%), kinesthetic (10.6%), tactile (8.5%) and the least preferred learning styles was verbal (6.3%) (See table1). The mean is (32.7), and standard deviation is (17.5).

Cognitive Learning Style

The general tendency of distribution shows that the majority of learners in school A classified themselves as assimilators (46.0%), converg-es (31.7%), accommodators (12.6%), and divergers (9.5 %) respectively. The mean is 33.7 and standard deviation is 13.6. In school B, compound learning style was dominating, a combination of accommodating and converging was indicated by the majority of learners (51.0%) followed by few learners who were assimilators (27.6%), convergers (0%), and accommodators (10.6) and divergers (10.6) respectively. The mean is 35.9 and the standard deviation is 16.7. Combined learners' responses of both schools showed that assimilating and converging were the dominating learning style, taught by teachers that belong to two different (sensitivity and inclusion) teaching style domains (See Table 2).

Personal Learning Style

The findings revealed that in school A, learners were more reflective than active, and more concrete than abstract, whereas in school B, learners were more reflective than active, and more abstract than concrete.

Compound Learning Style

The learners' responses to statements that explain compound learning styles (learners who

Table 1: Perceptual learning style (n=110)

	School A (N = 63)		School B (N= 47)	
Learning style	*Mean=39.6 Standard deviation= 21.2*		*Mean = 32.7 Standard deviation = 17.5*	
	No. of learners	*Percentage*	*No. of learner*	*Percentage*
Visual	36	57.1	12	25.5
Auditory	15	23.8	23	48.9
Kinaesthetic	5	7.9	5	10.6
Tactile	4	6.3	4	8.5
Verbal	3	4.8	3	6.3

Table 2: Cognitive learning style (n=110)

	School A (N = 63)		School B (N= 47)	
Learning style	*Mean=33.7 Standard deviation= 13.6*		*Mean = 35.9 Standard deviation =16.7*	
	No. of learners	*Percentage*	*No. of learner*	*Percentage*
Compound			(12 Assi +12conv = 24	51.0
Assimilators	29	46.0	13	27.6
Convergers	20	31.7	-	-
Accomodators	8	12.6	5	10.6
Divergers	6	9.5	5	10.6

prefer more than one learning styles) reveals that learners with compound learning style preference were dominating in school B (51.0%). The combination convergers-accommodators (24) were the majority identified in school B. Divergers-assimilators, and divergers-accommodators were evident in both schools.

Teaching Styles

Teachers used different teaching styles. Table 3 shows that in school A, the majority of learners indicated that their teacher preferred teacher- centered approach, and is subject-oriented. Low inclusion and low sensitivity domain ranked first (49.2%), followed by high inclusion and low sensitivity (31.7%), low inclusion and high sensitivity (12.6%) and high inclusion and high sensitivity (6.3%) respectively. The mean is 36.3 and the standard deviation is 14.9. This therefore means that the lecture method was used to teach all learners at the same time. English L2 learners need to be afforded an opportunity to practise the language more especially learners from educationally- disadvantaged schools because the school is the only place where these learners hear English spoken.

In School B, the majority of learners (42.5%) revealed that the teacher preferred learner-centered approach with low inclusion and high sensitivity (see Table 3). The teacher likes to use group discussion, demonstration, and guided activities, as it is prescribed in the curriculum and assessment policy statement. She views her role as mostly a facilitator of the learners' learning. High inclusion and high sensitivity is ranked second, followed by high inclusion and low sensitivity (12.7%), and low inclusion and low sensitivity (10.6%) respectively. The mean is 32.4 and the standard deviation is (12.1%).

DISCUSSION

In view of the perceptual learning style preference, the match and mismatch occurred. In one school where learners preferred visual presentations of the subject content, followed by auditory, kinesthetic, tactile and verbal learning styles respectively, their teacher preferred the lecture method. Visual learners prefer to read the written information or watch the teacher demonstrating in class, therefore, teachers were expected to provide learners with necessary apparatus that would assist each learner to reach his potential. Tthat was not evident in their classroom as their teacher believes in verbal presentation of the subject content. Auditory learners, who enjoy listening to their lecturers rather than practical opportunity, matched their teachers' preferred teaching style. Learning and teaching style congruence help learners achieve the desired outcome as mentioned by (Katowa-Mukwato et al. 2017). The least preferred was the verbal learning style. This implies that their teacher's preferred teaching style that encouraged learners to be passive listeners who just receive the information in the classroom and reproduce it in the examinations. However, this teacher operated on the assumption that the way she learned English L2 could also be applied effectively to her learners. Gilakjani (2012) argues that learners who prefer to listen to lectures might become tired of being hands on and get discouraged about studying English L2, and decide to quite. According to the constructivist theory which guides this paper, it is the learners' responsibility to construct their own knowledge, as highlighted by Linkage and Foncha (2015) that the responsibilities of teachers is to guide them along the way. The findings in School A above is similar to Gilakjanis' (2012) findings at

Table 3: Teaching style (n=110)

Learning style	School A (N = 63) Mean=36.3 Standard deviation= 14.9		School B (N= 47) Mean=32.4 Standard deviation =12.1	
	No. of learners	Percentage	No. of learner	Percentage
Low inclusion and low sensitivity	31	49.2	5	10.6
Low inclusion and high sensitivity	8	12.6	20	42.5
High inclusion and low sensitivity	20	31.7	6	12.7
High inclusion and high sensitivity	4	6.3	16	34.0

the Islamic Azad University as the prevailing learning style among EFAL students was visual one, in a learner - centered classroom. However, in this paper, the teacher's preferred teaching style was lecture method which does not allow learners to think critically and creatively. It becomes impossible for learners to achieve the desired learning outcomes as expected.

In school B, the majority of learners preferred more than one learning style per learner, in a learner- cantered classroom. In other words, a match and mismatch occurred. In view of the cognitive learning style preference, the findings revealed a mismatch between learning style and teaching style in one school (school A). The majority of learners were assimilators. These learners preferred abstract presentation of subject content. However, they were more reflective than active in a teacher-centered classroom. As reflective learners, they need to be afforded an opportunity to express themselves. They should be engaged in tasks that require them to be active participants such as debates, class discussions, and to reflect on their learning through activities such as journal entries, and project. This mismatch between their learning style and the teachers' teaching style indicates that either the learners' preferred learning style was not by choice, but was dependant on their teachers' teaching style, or learners' lack of knowledge of the learning style theory as explained in literature reviewed (Shah et al. 2013). To solve this problem, learners' learning should shift from being passive learners to being active learners, as Foncha (2013) suggests that they should create meaning from their experiences. In school B, learners with compound learning style preference ranked first. Divergers and convergers were the dominating learning style in the combinations identified. Wubbels et al. (2015) emphasizes that a blend of various styles is what makes teachers different. Most of the learners were active than reflective and concrete than abstract. In other words, the divergers and convergers liked to be hands on. Unlike the convergers, the divergers were uncomfortable with abstract and theoretical information.

It was also noted that the majority of learners in school A were impulsive. Impulsive learners prefer fluency to accuracy so that they do not give wrong answers, whereas, the reflective learners prefer accuracy to fluency. Most of the learners were introverted and they were used to teacher-centered classroom. In school B, learners were impulsive and extroverted. They preferred fluency to accuracy, and enjoyed group work. So, in this regard, these learners required a communicative classroom, which eliminate the weariness of learning, and mobilize the learners' thought regular in an active state (Liu 2014). Their teacher preferred the learner-centered approach. Their learning styles matched well with their teachers' teaching style. In view of the compound learning style preference, it was evident in both schools, but the majority was prevalent in school B. It was noted from the learners' responses that verbal learning style was the minority in both schools. However, during the observation sessions in their English classrooms, it was dominating in school B.

With regard to the English language practice in class, learners tend to focus more on accuracy than on fluency, though they had difficulties in mastering the language due to a poor exposure to it. They tried by all means not to make mistakes, but it was a completely challenging situation because they were not exposed to English at earlier grades so that they can communicate freely and with confidence. Learners seemed to be too concerned about their own linguistic accuracy, and this sometimes result in speaking very little in English classrooms. In this regard, teachers might end up criticizing their learners, or blaming their teaching capabilities (Boyd and Markarian 2015). This classroom atmosphere goes against communicative English language teaching approaches suggested by literature, which emphasize fluency over accuracy, and focus on learners' involvement in classroom activities. Therefore, teachers should give learners enough time to think actively before they speak, while also encouraging quick and prompt replies. They should create a pleasant, relaxed atmosphere in the classroom for their learners, to encourage them to speak English.

In view of the teachers' teaching styles, the findings generally revealed that both learner-centered and teacher – centered approach were utilized. In school A the teacher preferred a teacher- centered method (lecture method), while the teacher in school B preferred the learner – centered approach (cooperative learning). Based on learners' responses in schools, and what was observed in school A English classroom, teach-

ers were not familiar with teachers' teaching styles and learners' learning styles literature. Had they been informed about them, they may, consequently, be more aware and more likely develop teaching styles congruent with their learners' learning styles. The researcher assumes that when the Grade 8 English teachers and their learners take steps to understand, and mitigate issues related to learning and teaching styles match, the effects could be minimized. If the mismatch of learning and teaching style continues, it might result in unhappy learners, and a frustrated teacher.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, the researcher asserts that Grade 8 English teachers in the selected schools display a teaching-learning style conflict. Because the learners in both schools were diverse in terms of learning styles, teachers chose to ignore that, and approached all learners using a uniformly set of practices, which can be described as 'narrow' in school A, whilst 'effective' is a better description for school B. To reduce teacher-learner style conflict, the researcher advocates that teaching and learning styles be matched. The match between learning and teaching style result in deeper understanding and insight into a language, and a more positive attitude towards the English. When mismatches exist between learners' learning and the teachers' teaching styles, learners' understanding of English L2 drops.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is highly advisable that learners should know what type of learning styles they prefer so that they can be more conscious of their learning, and consciousness could make them understand why they are comfortable in a particular learning style but feel uncomfortable in another. It is recommended therefore that teachers who want to match learners' learning styles with their teaching styles should first diagnose their own learning styles, as well as their preferred teaching style. Teacher self-awareness should be the starting point, and then follows the understanding of learner preferences which will result in sound win-win pedagogy. It is suggested that teachers in both schools should be aware

of their learners' needs, then try to identify the preferred learning style to meet those needs. Secondly, learners can be taught partly in the teachers less preferred learning style(s). The teacher can also alter his teaching style to create teacher-learner style matching. Sometimes, the teacher can foster guided style-stretching. For example, since the majority of learners in both schools were assimilators (lectures), and convergers who prefer to work alone, teachers can guide them to be divergers (group work), accommodators who experiment with material on their own. The teacher should be able to teach across type, and they should be able to use teaching styles that promote the maximum degree of success for learners of all types.

REFERENCES

Abu-Asba A, Hazita A 2014. A match or mismatch between learning and teaching styles in science education. *International Journal of Education and Research,* 2: 3.
Artvinli E 2010. Cografya ogretmenlerinin ogretme stilleri. *Electrinik Journal of Social Sciences,* 9(33): 397-408.
Boyd MP, Markarian WC 2015. Dialogic teaching and dialogic stance. *Moving Beyond Interactional Form Research in Teaching of English,* 49(3): 272-296
Caga NP 2014. *Learning Styles of Educationally-disadvantaged Grade 8 Learners in Alice District: Implications for Teaching English as an Additional Language*. MTech Thesis, Unpublished. South Africa: Tshwane University of Technology.
Department of Education (DoE) 2011. *Curriculum Assessment and Policy Statement Grade R-9 (Schools) Policy. Overview–English*. Pretoria: Department of Education.
Dreher S 1997. Learning styles: Implications for learning and teaching. *Rural Educator,* 19(2): 26-29.
Foncha JW 2013. *An Investigation of Students' and Teachers' Attempts at Intercultural Communication: Exploring the Connections between Intercultural Communication Competence and Identity Construction*. PhD Thesis, Unpublished. South Africa: University of Western Cape.
Gilakjani AP 2012. A match or mismatch between learning styles of the learners and teaching styles of the teachers. *Modern Education and Computer Science*, 11: 51-60.
Heimlich JE 1990. *Measuring Teaching Style: A Correlation Study between the Van Tilburg/Heimlich Sensitivity Measure and the Myers-Briggs Personality Indicator of Educators*. Doctoral Dissertation. Columbus: The Ohio State University.
Hsieh SW, Jang YR, Hwang GJ, Chen NS 2011. Effects of teaching and learning styles on Students' reflection levels for ubiquitous learning. *Computers and Education*, 57: 1194-1201.
Katowa-Mukwato P, Chapima F, Nambala-Sianchapa B, Mwiinga-Kalusopa V 2017.Learning styles and

intelligence types versus academic performance of nursing students of the University of Zambia. *Journal of Nursing Education and Practice*, 7(10): 83-90.

Linake MA, Foncha JW 2015. A Constructivist View of Journaling: Language learning in an English first additional language classroom. *Journal of Social Sciences,* 44(23): 113-119.

Liu XW 2014. Study on the teaching strategies of the beginning Russian Course. *Russian Language Learning,* 5: 65.

Shah K, Ahmed J, Shenoy N 2013. How different are students and their learning styles? *International Journal of Research in Medical Science,* 1(3): 212-215

Wubbels T, Brekelmans M, Brok P, Wijsman L, Mainhard T, Van Tartwijk J 2015. Teacher-student relationships and classroom management. In: ET Emmer, EJ Sabornie (Eds.): *Handbook of Classroom Management.* 2nd Edition. New York, London: Routledge, pp. 363-386.