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THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN EFL STUDENTS' PREFERRED LEARNING STYLES AND EFL TEACHERS' PREFERRED TEACHING STYLES IN TRANSCARPATIA

This article posits the critical importance of adequately preparing educators to equip future generations with essential language skills. The initial sections of the paper explore the diverse learning and teaching styles identified by various researchers (Dunn and Dunn, 1979; Grasha 2002; Kazemi and Soleimani, 2013; Peacock, 2001) and the factors influencing the selection of these styles. The empirical segment of the study encompasses a survey conducted among teachers and students in Transcarpathia, revealing that while differences in learning and teaching styles are minimal, there is a pressing need to harmonize these styles to accommodate the predominant and global preferences observed.

The study seeks to address the question of how the learning strategies of students differ from the teaching strategies employed by educators and how these differences may impact the overall teaching process. Recognizing and accommodating these discrepancies will enable educators in Transcarpathia to foster a more inclusive and effective learning environment. By integrating active and reflective elements, abstract concepts, and visual aids, while maintaining a balance between sequential and global teaching methods, educators can better address the diverse needs of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners.

A teaching strategy is defined as a systematic plan or method employed to achieve specific educational objectives. Furthermore, teaching strategies encompass the actions taken by educators or instructional tools – such as computers, programmed texts, or audiovisual materials – to facilitate learning. Each teacher's approach to a lesson and its particular objectives constitutes their teaching strategy. It is crucial to note that a method effective for one type of content may not yield the same results with another.

While there is significant overlap in preferences for sensory and visual learning styles, differences between active and reflective, as well as concrete and abstract learning preferences, highlight areas for pedagogical enhancement. A more balanced approach that incorporates a range of learning strategies is essential for effectively meeting the learning needs of students in Transcarpathia. To address the identified differences, it is recommended that educators adopt a balanced strategy that includes both active engagement and reflective tasks, thereby promoting individual reflection and strategic thinking. This approach will better support EFL learners and contribute to their success in both personal and professional contexts.

Key words: teaching styles, learning styles, Transcarpathia, active and reflective elements, pedagogical improvement.

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РІЗНИЦЯ МІЖ СТИЛЯМИ НАВЧАННЯ, ЯКИМ НАДАЮТЬ ПЕРЕВАГУ СТУДЕНТИ, ЯКІ ВИВЧАЮТЬ АНГЛІЙСЬКУ ЯК ІНОЗЕМНУ МОВУ ТА СТИЛЯМИ ВИКЛАДАННЯ, ЯКИМ НАДАЮТЬ ПЕРЕВАГУ ВИКЛАДАЧІ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ ЯК ІНОЗЕМНОЇ НА ЗАКАРПАТТІ

У цій статті підкреслюється критична важливість адекватної підготовки викладачів, щоб забезпечити майбутні покоління необхідними мовними навичками. У перших розділах статті розглядаються різноманітні стилі навчання та викладання, визначені різними дослідниками (Dunn і Dunn, 1979; Grasha, 2002; Kazemi і Soleimani, 2013; Peacock, 2001), а також фактори, що впливають на вибір цих стилів. Емпіричний сегмент дослідження охоплює опитування, проведене серед вчителів і учнів Закарпаття, яке показало, що хоча відмінності в стилях навчання та викладання є мінімальними, існує нагальна потреба в гармонізації цих стилів з урахуванням домінуючих і глобальних уподобань.

Дослідження має на меті з'ясувати, чим навчальні стратегії студентів відрізняються від стратегій викладання, які застосовують викладачі, і як ці відмінності можуть вплинути на загальний процес навчання. Визнання та врахування цих розбіжностей дозволить освітянам Закарпаття створити більш інклюзивне та ефективне навчальне середовище. Інтегруючи активні та рефлексивні елементи, абстрактні поняття та наочні посібники, зберігаючи баланс між послідовними та глобальними методами викладання, викладачі зможуть краще задовольнити різноманітні потреби тих, хто вивчає англійську мову як іноземну (EFL).

Стратегія викладання визначається як систематичний план або метод, що використовується для досягнення конкретних освітніх цілей. Крім того, стратегія викладання охоплює дії викладачів або навчальні інструменти, такі як комп'ютери, запрограмовані тексти чи аудіовізуальні матеріали, для сприяння навчанню. Підхід кожного вчителя до уроку та його конкретних цілей є його стратегією викладання. Важливо зазначити, що метод, ефективний для одного типу контенту, може не дати таких самих результатів для іншого.

Хоча переваги сенсорного та візуального стилів навчання значною мірою збігаються, відмінності між активним та рефлексивним, а також між конкретним та абстрактним навчанням вказують на сфери для педагогічного вдосконалення. Більш збалансований підхід, що включає різноманітні стратегії навчання, має важливе значення для ефективного задоволення навчальних потреб учнів Закарпаття. Для усунення виявлених відмінностей педагогам рекомендується прийняти збалансовану стратегію, яка поєднує активне залучення та рефлексивні завдання, сприяючи індивідуальній рефлексії та стратегічному мисленню. Такий підхід забезпечить кращу підтримку студентів, які вивчають англійську мову професійного спрямування, і сприятиме їхньому успіху як в особистому, так і в професійному контекстах.

Ключові слова: стилі викладання, стилі навчання, Закарпаття, активні та рефлексивні елементи, педагогічне вдосконалення.

Introduction. When a teacher's teaching approach did not match the way students learned best, up to 72% of students reported feeling sad or frustrated, and a significant number, 76%, claimed that their EFL learning suffered (Peacock, 2001). Therefore, the topic is immensely important to study in order to get an idea of how students feel regarding their useful and less useful learning strategies, what they regard as highly helpful or not so helpful in their learning process. On the other side, it would be principal to see how teachers implement strategies in their teaching process to make it the most efficient and make the most of it.

By researching this area, it can give a clearer image about what we as teachers need to change or continue to do in favour of a highly productive end-product of this certain operation. Researching this area would probably give educators a deeper understanding of EFL learners' requirements. To increase students' interest and comprehension in learning a second language, this could result in more dependable and effective teaching tools and procedures (Suh and Kim, 2012).

Literature review. Learning strategies are the methods or approaches that learners use to acquire a second language. These strategies are deliberate

behaviours that learners employ to achieve their language learning goals. According to Felder and Silverman, learning strategies are deliberate or potentially deliberate behaviours (Felder and Silverman, 1988). Suh and Kim (2012: 223) add that every learning process requires a specific strategy to accomplish the ultimate learning objective, emphasizing that not all strategies are beneficial for every learner as individuals acquire knowledge differently.

Key factors to consider in the selection of learning strategies include personality type, learning goals, and motivations. Various interpretations of "learning strategies" have been provided by researchers such as Dunn and Dunn (1979), Grasha (2002), and Dörnyei (2009). These definitions highlight the persistent qualities in learners' behaviours, the impact of biology and development, individual traits affecting learning, habitual ways of processing information, and the profile of an individual's approach to learning.

Gulbinskienė and Oleskeviciene (2019) conducted a study involving 77 Lithuanian university students to identify the most efficient language learning methods. The results indicated that a variety of learning styles significantly impact the teaching and learning process

in EFL education. Teachers need to recognize students' learning preferences and styles to better accommodate their needs. Setia (2018) agrees, noting that students choose different learning approaches based on age differences within groups.

Five hypotheses were formulated about learning styles:

- Each student has unique learning styles, strengths, and weaknesses.
- Mismatches between teaching and learning styles lead to learning failure and frustration.
- Unchecked learning styles persist despite instructional strategies.
- Learning styles, being partly habitual, are adaptable.
- Students aware of various approaches learn more effectively.

Appropriate learning practices improve learner autonomy, independence, and self-direction, enabling students to continue learning outside the traditional classroom. Cognitive psychology research supports that learning techniques help students integrate new knowledge into their preexisting mental structures, resulting in more sophisticated schemata. Language learners form their conceptions of the target language and culture as they progress. Learning techniques are teachable, unlike other learner traits like capability, attitude, drives, personality, and cognitive style (Felder and Silverman, 1988).

Learning strategies can be categorized into skill areas (speaking, writing, listening, reading, vocabulary, translation) and processes (cognitive, metacognitive, affective, social) (Cohen, 1990). Cognitive methods involve recognizing, categorizing, and retaining linguistic content. Metacognitive strategies help learners control their learning through preparation, verification, and assessment. Affective techniques involve emotions, motivation, and attitudes to lower anxiety and boost self-esteem. Social strategies facilitate interactions between language learners and native speakers (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990).

Impact of Intelligence on Learning Style Preferences. Some define intelligence as “the ability to respond successfully to new situations and the capacity to learn from one’s past experience” (Gardner, 1983, p. 21), critiquing earlier theories for focusing too much on language and reasoning. McKenzie adds that intelligence involves learning through patterns, rhythms, and music. Teachers play a vital role in helping students utilize their intelligences to learn effectively, leading to higher success rates in education and work (Nolen, 2003).

Mayer and Salovey (1997) distinguish intelligence and emotion: cognitive abilities include memory and

reasoning, while emotional abilities involve moods and assessments. Emotional intelligence, starting with perceiving emotions and moving to emotional regulation, enhances both emotional and intellectual growth.

Impact of Personality on Learning Style Preferences. Personality, comprising traits like curiosity, imagination, and motivation, influences learning styles and success (Sharp, 2009). Studies show mixed results on the correlation between personality and language learning strategies. For example, Ehrman and Oxford found extroverts prefer social tactics, while introverts prefer metacognitive strategies. Traits like openness and conscientiousness strongly predict strategy use (Ehrman and Oxford, 1990).

Impact of Age on Learning Style Preferences. Age influences language acquisition strategies, with cognitive capacity improving over time. Preschoolers lack developed strategies, while primary school students begin mastering them. Middle and high school students refine strategies, adapting them to various tasks. Nguyen and Godwyll found older learners use compensation strategies more, while younger learners use diverse strategies (Nguyen and Godwyll, 2010).

Impact of Gender on Learning Style Preferences. There are gender differences in strategy use, with females generally employing more varied strategies. Studies found women use more intuitive and emotional strategies, while men prefer memory strategies. Some studies found no significant overall gender differences, suggesting nuanced variations (Green & Oxford, 1995).

Impact of Motivation on Learning Style Preferences. Lambert (1955) proposed that emotional attachment or genuine interest motivates language learning. Gardner and Lambert (1959) emphasized integrative and instrumental orientations. Dörnyei (2009) highlighted factors like visualizing ideal selves and using procedural techniques to enhance motivation. Effective motivation strategies significantly improve language learning outcomes.

Teaching styles. The effectiveness of teaching styles is influenced by how well they align with students' learning preferences. Felder identifies key questions to categorize teaching styles, focusing on the type of knowledge, presentation mode, organization of information, student participation, and viewpoint:

1. Knowledge Emphasis: Concrete (factual) vs. abstract (theoretical).
2. Presentation Mode: Visual (pictures, diagrams) vs. verbal (lectures, discussions).
3. Organization: Inductive (phenomena to principles) vs. deductive (principles to phenomena).
4. Participation: Active (engagement) vs. passive (observation).

5. Viewpoint: Sequential (step-by-step) vs. global (context and relevance).

Research by Dunn and Dunn (1979) and others suggest that aligning teaching methods with student learning styles can enhance motivation and academic achievement. Felder and Soloman propose matching teaching styles to corresponding learning styles for better educational outcomes. For instance, concrete teaching aligns with sensing learning, while abstract teaching aligns with intuitive learning.

Research Objective and Design. The primary objective of this research is to explore the various teaching and learning strategies employed in Transcarpathian schools. This investigation seeks to identify effective methods that educators use to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes in this culturally diverse region. Additionally, the study aims to understand how these strategies meet the unique educational needs of students and their impact on language acquisition. Ultimately, this research intends to provide insights that could lead to the development of more tailored and effective educational practices in Transcarpathia.

To gather the necessary information, two online questionnaires were used. The first questionnaire targeted 9th to 11th-grade students to identify their learning preferences based on the Index of Learning Styles (ILS) developed by Felder and Soloman. This validated tool assesses learning styles across four dimensions, with scores ranging from +11 to -11 per dimension. The second questionnaire was completed by EFL teachers in Transcarpathia, modified from the student version to assess teaching preferences.

Participants and Procedure. Data were collected from 52 Transcarpathian students studying EFL in Hungarian-language schools and 38 teachers from various schools in the region. The student participants were high school learners aged 15–17, predominantly taught by the surveyed teachers. The geographical distribution of the participating teachers was documented to ensure a representative sample.

The research process involved several steps:

1. Data Collection: Online questionnaires were distributed to both students and teachers.

2. Data Analysis: Responses were analyzed using Microsoft Excel, with separate analyses for student and teacher data to provide detailed insights.

Research Results. Active vs. Passive/Reflective Preferences. The findings indicate that both teachers and students in Transcarpathia demonstrate a strong preference for active engagement within the classroom environment. Teachers exhibit a slight inclination towards active teaching methodologies,

emphasizing practical involvement, creativity, and collaborative projects. Correspondingly, students also display a significant affinity for active learning methods, which fosters a synergistic enhancement of classroom engagement. Nonetheless, it is suggested that the occasional incorporation of passive or reflective elements may benefit students who favour contemplative approaches.

Concrete vs. Abstract/Sensing vs. Intuitive Preferences. A discernible divergence is observed between concrete and abstract teaching and learning styles. Teachers predominantly favor concrete methodologies, prioritizing practical, real-life examples in their instructional practices. While students similarly prefer practical learning experiences, they express an appreciation for theoretical and abstract concepts in specific contexts. Therefore, the introduction of more abstract content could more effectively address the diverse learning preferences of students.

Visual vs. Verbal Preferences. Both educators and students exhibit a robust preference for visual learning aids. Teachers extensively utilize diagrams, maps, and charts, which aligns well with the visual learning inclinations of their students. This congruence suggests that an expansion of visual aids could further enhance learning outcomes, particularly in the comprehension of complex language structures and vocabulary.

Sequential vs. Global Preferences. The analysis reveals a slight misalignment between teaching and learning preferences concerning sequential and global styles. Teachers show a marginal preference for global teaching styles, emphasizing holistic understanding prior to delving into specifics. In contrast, students demonstrate a preference for sequential learning, valuing structured, step-by-step instructional approaches.

When comparing the current results with earlier studies, one can confirm a clear preference among students for active and visually focused learning styles, emphasizing the value of practical and visually oriented teaching methods. Interestingly, while the earlier studies identified visual preference as the third most popular, the present findings place it as the most preferred, followed by auditory and tactile preferences, with kinaesthetic preferences being the least favoured.

Overall, despite a robust alignment in sensory and visual learning preferences, discrepancies in active versus reflective and concrete versus abstract preferences highlight areas for potential pedagogical refinement. By adopting a balanced approach that incorporates a variety of teaching strategies, educators can better address the diverse learning needs of students in Transcarpathia.

To bridge the identified gaps, it is recommended that educators implement a balanced strategy that integrates both active and reflective elements. While maintaining the strong preference for active engagement, teachers should also include reflective assignments that promote individual contemplation and strategic thinking.

In addressing the divergence between concrete and abstract preferences, educators should consider introducing more theoretical content in conjunction with practical examples. This hybrid approach would cater to students' appreciation for both practical and abstract learning.

The strong alignment in visual preferences should be leveraged by continuing to expand the use of visual aids. An incorporation of both visual and verbal instructional methods will ensure that the learning preferences of all students are effectively addressed.

Finally, to reconcile the differences in sequential versus global preferences, educators should provide clear, step-by-step instructions and structured learning aids. This approach will support students who favour sequential learning while accommodating those who benefit from understanding overarching concepts.

Conclusions. Language learning is a lifelong endeavour that commences at birth and persists throughout an individual's life. It plays a crucial role in communication, relationship building, and environmental navigation, facilitating exploration, collaboration, and curiosity. This study underscores the necessity of training educators to ensure that future generations acquire robust language skills essential for personal and professional success.

The empirical research conducted in Transcarpathia examined the alignment between learning and teaching styles, yielding significant insights. While sensory and visual learning preferences exhibit strong alignment, notable disparities in active versus reflective and concrete versus abstract preferences were identified, indicating opportunities for pedagogical enhancement.

A balanced approach that incorporates both active and reflective elements is strongly recommended. Educators should introduce more theoretical content alongside practical examples to cater to both concrete and abstract learners. By leveraging the strong visual preferences among students, and expanding the use of visual aids while integrating visual and verbal instructional methods, educators can more effectively address diverse learning needs.

To bridge the gap regarding sequential versus global preferences, educators should provide clear, step-by-step instructions while accommodating overarching concepts. This study highlights the importance of integrating visual materials in language teaching and suggests that EFL training programs emphasize developing skills for effectively using visual aids. Additionally, workshops on creating and utilizing visual content and adapting classroom designs to facilitate visual learning could prove particularly beneficial.

Future research should prioritize real-life classroom observations to gain a deeper understanding of how meeting students' needs influences their learning progress. Furthermore, exploring the variables that affect learning styles could yield additional insights.

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