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Learning Style Preferences of French Learners: A Perspective from Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this research was to determine the learning style preferences of French learners in Bangladesh. A questionnaire was distributed among the French learners in different public universities and two other French language institutes across the country. Reid's (1984) questionnaire comprises thirty learning style preference items, which are classified into six separate learning styles, i.e., auditory, visual, kinesthetic, tactile, group, and individual styles. The questionnaire is prepared to accumulate quantitative data. The researcher used five questions for the interview to collect the qualitative data. Findings of the survey reveal that visual, group, tactile, and kinesthetic learning styles were determined as major learning styles among the participants of this study. Some recommendations, like using different teaching aids such as audio-video materials and applying different techniques, have been proposed for

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Introduction





Generally, in Bangladesh, the teaching-learning approaches are teacher-centric, not student-centric. Sometimes, the instructor does not give priority to the necessity of the learners at the time of teaching a foreign language. Most of the time, the instructor follows the traditional way of teaching which they are used to from their students' lives. If they want to apply useful and effective methodologies, they will need a lot of research and studies about these for better teaching-learning approaches. Sometimes French instructors think that they do not get the desired outcomes from the French learners by the formative and summative assessments. Many educationists suggest that instructors should try to analyze and find out the needs, desires, aims, goals and objectives at the end of the sessions or courses. According to Alfonseca et al. (2006), teachers can modify acceptable tactics and procedures to accommodate students' preferences if they appraise their learning styles. That is why the learners need to know the preferred way of

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learning of the learners and we can say these as learning styles. Because, according to Dantas and Cunha (2020), learners indicate preferences for a range of learning stimuli, such as written texts, readings, discussions, films, drawings, diagrams, or practical exercises with a clear goal. So being aware about students' learning styles and application of the teaching-learning approaches based on these learning styles would immensely help the learners to improve and to be more competent in theoretical and practical knowledge and language skills. In determining learning styles, instructors must try to find out and apply suitable methodologies and techniques to instruct in the courses.

Background

Some researchers like Zafar and Meenakshi (2012) have emphasized some factors of learning differences among language learners. Learning style is the dominant factors among them that is responsible for learning differences in learners. MacKeracher (2004) said that there are different types of domains such as cognitive, affect ive, physiological and social etiquette that work as important indicators of a student's perception, interaction and response to the learning atmosphere. The way of learning differs from man to man. Some prefer to learn by seeing, someone by hearing, someone by acting or doing by hand and so on. Over the last thirty years, educational researchers have inaugurated several models and techniques to find out the learning styles of every individual learner. Knowing one's learning style, one would be able to apply appropriate methods and techniques for better foreign language proficiency and skills. So it is important for the Bangladeshi French learners to know their own learning styles to learn better and faster.

Objective of the study

The objective of this research is to identify the major learning styles what are preferred by the French learners in Bangladesh. The research presents an overall picture of the liking and disliking of the learners who are learning French as a foreign language. As a result, various teaching-learning strategies and approaches for different types of learners in the classrooms would be applied by the French instructors, so that the French learners would be more beneficial and fluent in four skills of language. Besides the French teachers and experts would be also able to design teaching-learning materials and develop the curriculum on the basis of learners' requirements and demands.

Literature Review

Oxford et al. (1991) simply provide a definition, where learning style is a common method, used by students to know a new content or handle a new problem. Learning styles are learning domains that are comparatively firm indicators of a learner's perception, interaction and

responses to the learning atmosphere (Keefe, 1979). According to Reid (1998), learners' internal characteristics are mainly responsible for forming their learning styles, which regulate the learners to comprehend and intake any piece of new information unconsciously. Nunan (1995) illuminated the definition of learning styles in a different light. He has alluded to learning styles as the outcome of personality variation comprising cognitive and psychological form, sociocultural context and academic achievement. There is a difference between learning tactics and styles, the earlier one mainly refers to the preferred ways of going about learning, which simply indicates that learners' different approaches in their learning process are called learning styles. Reid (1998) explores that as an outer skills, students consciously utilize their learning strategies to develop their metacognitive and cognitive strategies. Similarly, Nunan (1995) considers that learners assimilate and practice target language on the basis of the learning strategies, he also added that the whole thing runs on as the psychological procedures. Learning style is not a linear process; rather, Dörnyei (2007) has articulated them as bipolar entities (for instance, reflective versus impulsive, random versus sequential) that comprise two utmost of a broad continuum.

Huda (2013) claimed that the summation of all these definitions reveals that learning style is an extension concept that accumulates the learner's domains of learning. The suggestion of learning styles theory proponents shows a possibility of detecting the students' learning styles. In this regard, there are three supporting views. First of all, ascertaining the learning style of a student and implementing it in his/her learning process increases his/her learning. Secondly, it becomes easy for a student to memorize a lesson if it is taught in that particular learning style. Finally, it looks naturally correct and elicits a short discussion about its merits (Muse, 2001). For introducing a better teaching-learning approach in language classrooms, researchers try to come out with a preferable learning style. For this reason, many researchers have conducted various research in different places of the world to identify the preferred learning styles in those places. Among them, Howie (2011) placed based on education. Generally, its primary concern is to build a bridge between instructional style and individual learning style preferences.

Based on Reid's hypotheses, Mathew Peacock (2001) developed the interrelation between teaching and learning styles. His observation reveals that learner's preferences and teachers' preferences aren't the same. Additionally, Rao Zhenhui (2001) has examined learning styles and developed self-aware EFL learners, demonstrating a strong relationship between instruction and learning styles. His proposition points out that the success of this correlation lies in the process when teachers teach giving importance to their learners' needs, demands, potentials etc. Felder (1995) discovered that individuals' learning styles characteristically acquire, keep, and regain information. By giving priority to the variety of learners' process of comprehension and dealing with information, it was asserted by Felder (2002) that "people have different learning styles that are reflected in different academic strengths, weaknesses, competencies, and interests." According to Tripp and Moore (2007) "students frequently concentrate on

facts, statistics, and algorithms. While many of them liked to study actively, others of them have significant responses to visual forms of learning." Gokalp's (2013) statistical analysis identified a number of noteworthy distinctions between students' academic performance and their learning preferences. Gülhanım ÜNSAL (2018) conducted a study on the significance of learning styles in Foreign Language Teaching at Marmara University in Turkey to the French learners. The researcher found that the learners preferred mainly the visual learning style, followed by kinesthetic and auditory learning styles and very few other learning styles.

There was no any research yet for identifying the learning style preferences of French learners in the context of Bangladesh. There are few researches to explore the learning style preferences of English as a foreign language or English as a second language in Bangladesh. Islam (2011) made an effort to investigate the learning preferences of Bangladeshi undergraduate EFL students and the knowledge of their professors in this regard. According to his research, most kids do not want to study alone in the class and the class teachers are not fully concerned of this fact. However, not only teachers but also students like to use multimedia and other visual aids during teaching-learning approaches in the class. Huda (2013) studied how higher secondary school pupils like to learn. Their preferences for tactile, auditory, field-dependent and fieldindependent, and reflective learning are demonstrated by this study. Besides, Rafique (2017) conducted a research to explore the learning style preferences of the ELT students of University of Dhaka. She explored that the learners have more preferences for auditory, group, tactile, and kinesthetic learning styles and less preferences for visual and individual learning styles. But it contrasts with Reid's (1987) study, which found that Asians prioritized visual style. Actually in Bangladesh, the students learn English from their childhood and French is very new language for the majority of the learners.

The methods of the study Respondents

In this research, the population size is six hundred, but among them three hundred students of French learners from Dhaka University, Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, Jagannath University, Rajshahi University, Jahangirnagar University, Khulna University, Alliance Françoise de Dhaka, and Alliance Française de Chittagong have been selected purposively for the quantitative data through a questionnaire. Among them, fifty students have been selected randomly for the qualitative data through five interview questions.

Survey Tools and methodology

The study is based on a mixed-methods approach that is conducted by using a questionnaire and an interview. Survey participants have been selected randomly, and the participants for the interview have been selected also randomly from the survey participants. It is a mixed-methods

study, and both quantitative and qualitative results will be found at the end of this study.

The questionnaire consists of thirty closed-ended questions. In this research, the data collection tool Reid's (1984) 'Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire' (PLSPQ) has been used. On the basis of learning style preference, the questionnaire comprises thirty items, which are divided into six modes such as individual, group, auditory, visual, tactile, and kinesthetic styles. A five-point Likert scale is used to organize the questionnaire, which ranges from strongly agree to strongly disagree for quantitative data collection. Participant's views on often used and rarely used learning modes. The participant's opinions are collected through five interview questions using audio recordings.

At the outset of a class, the researcher administered the questionnaire. The aims and purposes of the survey are revealed by the researcher prior to the allotment of the questionnaire. The questionnaire is examined using the Microsoft Excel program. The range of the participants' selected learning styles, from highest to lowest, is determined by computing descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, and means) for every variable. Conversely, the interview questions were utilized to investigate the learning style preferences of French learners using the descriptive analytical methodology.

Results and Discussion of the Findings Visual Learning Styles

Table 1 presents the frequency, percentage and mean of French language learners' visual learning style preference.

Table 1: Questionnaire Results: Visual Learning Style

	Question number of	5		4		3		2		1		u	
No.	PLSPQ questionnaire	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	Mean	
1	6	108	36	152	50.67	21	7	10	3.33	9	3	4.13	
		95	31.67	120	40	26	8.66	34	11.33	25	8.33	3.75	
2	10												
3	12	50	16.67	147	49	34	11.33	60	20	9	3	3.57	

4	24	39	13	150	50	64	21.3	30	10	17	5.7	3.55
5	29	53	17.6	137	45.67	70	23.33	28	9.33	12	4	3.63
Mean of Visual Learning Style												3.73

5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Undecided, 2 = Disagree, 1 = Strongly Disagree,

f = Frequency, %= Percentage

Here, Table 1 represents the French language learners' visual learning style performance. More than half of the students (50.67%) learn better by reading what the teacher writes on the board. This table also shows that 50 percent of the students learn better by reading textbooks than by listening to lectures, and 49% of students understand better when they read instructions or information, but still 20% of students don't understand well only by only reading instructions or information. Besides, 23.33% are confused about whether they learn more or not by only reading textbooks than by listening to lectures.

Auditory Learning Style

Table 2 reveals the frequency, percentage and mean of French language learners' auditory learning style preference.

Table 2: Questionnaire Results: Auditory Learning Style

	Question Number of	5		4	4		3			1		U
No.	PLSPQ questionnaire	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	Mean
1	1	112	37.33	128	42.67	42	14	14	4.67	4	1.33	4.10
2	7	96	32	120	40	42	14	30	10	12	4	3.86
3	9	80	26.67	82	27.33	50	16.67	82	27.33	6	2	3.49
4	17	62	20.67	88	29.33	22	7.33	88	29.33	40	13.33	3.15
5	20	20	6.67	80	26.67	42	14	120	40	38	12.67	2.75
Me	an of Auditory Learning	Style										3.47

5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Undecided, 2 = Disagree, 1 = Strongly Disagree,

f = Frequency, %= Percentage

Table 2 shows that the majority of the students (37.33% strongly agreed and 42.66% agreed) understand better when the teacher gives the instructions. But 40% think that they don't learn better when they listen to someone rather than participate in it. Similarly, 29.33% do not only prefer listening to the lecture in class. Besides, the results also express that 16.66% are not sure about whether they remember something better or not when they hear it well without reading.

Kinesthetic Learning Style

Table 3 shows the frequency, percentage and mean of French language learners' kinesthetic learning style preference.

Table 3: Question	maire Result	ts: Kinesthetic	Learning Style
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	Question	Num-	5	5			3		2		1		
	ber of PLSPQ	anaa	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
No.	tionnaire	ques-											Mean
Z													2
1	2		94	31.33	128	42.67	38	12.67	32	10.67	8	2.66	3.90
2	8		52	17.33	108	36	51	17	70	23.33	19	6.33	3.35
3	15		71	23.67	101	33.67	70	23.33	48	16	10	3.33	3.58
4	19		86	28.67	135	45	49	16.33	20	6.67	10	3.33	3.90
5	26		52	17.33	108	36	68	22.66	54	18	18	6	3.41
Me	an of Kinest	hetic L	earning	g Style									3.63

5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Undecided, 2 = Disagree, 1 = Strongly Disagree,

f = Frequency, %= Percentage

Table 3 reveals that the majority of the students understand things better when they learn something by playing role in the class. Similarly, in class, 42.66% of students would rather learn by doing something in class. On the other hand, 23.33% find it difficult to focus more clearly when they move. Moreover, 22.66% are not sure about whether they move their hands a lot or not to express themselves when they speak.

Tactile Learning Style

Table 4 shows the frequency, percentage and mean of Tactile learning style preference among French language learners.

Table 4: Questionnaire Results: Tactile Learning Style

	Question Number of	5		4		3		2		1		
No.	PLSPQ questionnaire	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	Mean
1	11	77	25.67	118	39.33	74	24.67	22	7.33	9	3	3.81
	14	90	30	141	47	56	18.66	10	3.33	3	1	4.02
2												
3	16	68	22.67	71	23.67	78	26	65	21.67	18	6	3.35
3	10	00	22.07	/ 1	23.07	/0	20	0.5	21.07	10	O	3.33
4	22	68	22.67	81	27	74	24.66	58	19.33	19	6.33	3.40
5	25	72	24	120	40	52	17.33	48	16	8	2.67	3.67
Me	an of Tactile Learning S	tyle	1									3.65

5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Undecided, 2 = Disagree, 1 = Strongly Disagree,

f = Frequency, %= Percentage

Table 4 reveals the tactile learning style preferences among the French learners in Bangladesh. The larger part of the students (47%) think that creating materials for a class project, such as posters or flashcards, helps them to learn more. In addition, 40% of students often illustrate key points in their studies with charts or diagrams. But 26% are still confused about whether they learn better or not when they make drawings during their studies. On the other hand, 26% of learners think that they do not learn better by making drawings.

Group Learning Style

Table 5 shows the frequency, percentage and mean of group learning style preference among French language learners.

Table 5: Questionnaire Results: Group Learning Style

	Question Number	5		4	4		3			1		
	of	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
No.	PLSPQ question-											Mean
Z	naire											Σ
1	3	82	27.33	129	43	40	13.33	29	9.67	20	6.67	3.74
	4	78	26	140	46.67	32	10.67	33	11	17	5.67	3.76
2												
3	5	81	27	135	45	32	10.67	32	10.67	20	6.67	3.75
4	21	74	24.67	129	43	26	8.67	49	16.33	21	7	3.62
5	23	68	22.67	134	44.67	36	12	47	15.67	15	5	3.64
Me	an of Group Learning	g Sty	le		•		•	•	•			3.70

5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Undecided, 2 = Disagree, 1 = Strongly Disagree,

f = Frequency, %= Percentage

The results of Table 5 show that 46.66% of the French learners like discussion in the class and group projects. Similarly, 45% like to share their ideas with their classmates. But 40% are still confused about whether they get more work done or not when they work with others. On the other hand, 16.33% of respondents said they detest working on a task with two or three classmates. Besides, 15% do not prefer to study with others. Because they think that they cannot remember things better if they study with others.

Individual Learning Style

Table 6 shows the frequency, percentage and mean of group learning style preference among the learners.

Table 6: Questionnaire Results: Individual Learning Style

	Question Number	5		4	4		3		2			
	of	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
No.	PLSPQ question- naire											Mean
1	13	77	25.67	97	32.33	48	16	55	18.33	23	7.67	3.50
	18	96	32	111	37	31	10.33	42	14	20	6.67	3.74
2												
3	27	44	14.67	67	22.33	62	20.67	90	30	38	12.67	3.00
4	28	58	19.33	76	25.33	36	12	100	33.33	30	10	3.11
5	30	83	27.67	138	46	38	12.67	26	8.67	15	5	3.84
Mea	n of Individual Lear	rning	Style	ļ.	I.		I.	1	1	1	1	3.44

5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Undecided, 2 = Disagree, 1 = Strongly Disagree,

f = Frequency, %= Percentage

Table 6 reveals that 46% prefer their own ideas when they solve problems. Besides, 32.33 % of the learners think that when they study alone, they remember things better. But 20.66% are uncertain about whether they work better or not when they work alone. On the contrary, 33.33 % do not prefer working on projects by themselves. Similarly, 30% think that they work better when they work alone.

Most common and least common learning style among the French learners in Bangladesh

From the data of six tables the most common and the least common learning style among the French learners in Bangladesh are figured below:

Figure 1: Means of the learning styles

Figure 1 reveal that visual learning style has the highest mean (M=3.73) that means it is the most preferred learning style. On the other hand, individual learning style has the lowest mean

(M=3.44) that means it is the least preferred learning style among the French learners in the perspective of Bangladesh. French learners have also less preferences for auditory learning style (M=3.47). Group learning style has the second highest mean (M=3.70). Besides, tactile learning style (M=3.65) and kinesthetic learning style (M=3.63) are also preferred learning styles among the French learners in Bangladesh.

Results of the Interview

A greater number of the students' interview responses corroborate the quantitative data acquired via questionnaires. The first question was about their preferred learning style. Almost all (41 students) other students have similar thoughts as they have responded to the previous questionnaire. Surprisingly, the opinions of the other nine students regarding their own learning styles did not align with their answers to the survey. For example, they were identified as visual learners on the questionnaire, and they stated that they learn best when they adopt auditory and group learning methods.

For the second question, almost all of them, thirty-eight students, said that previously they were not aware of their own learning style, but they had some preferred activities to learn something better. Only twelve students have read in newspaper or in blogs that there are something named learning styles and everyone has his or her own learning style.

The third question was about their approach to learning new French vocabulary or grammar concepts. The majority of the learners, twenty out of fifty, said that they learn new vocabulary when they read a text or see the word on a whiteboard. If they find new vocabulary in a phrase, they mark it and search for it in an online dictionary or ask the teacher. Fourteen students answered that they learn better by reading exercises, and sixteen students responded that they learn better by group discussion. But the majority of them (thirty-three) like to learn new grammatical concepts through discussion with the teacher using a whiteboard, a power point, reading the rules written in the book, or watching videos from YouTube. Some students (fourteen) like to learn writing on the notepad when they read the grammatical rules or listen to these rules from the teachers. Very few students (three) prefer to learn by themselves.

For the fourth question, all of them agreed that it is important to determine one's learning style to learn better. Because if they know properly what is his or her learning style and how to learn better, they will be more benefitted and learn faster.

For the fifth question, if their own particular way of learning does not match with the classroom activities of the teacher, they always try to adapt to it, though it is not hundred percent fruitful for them. They try to recover it after the classroom using their preferred learning activities.

Implication of the study

Huge number of French students will be benefitted, if they are aware of their own learning style and know which activities they should do when they will learn any rules of the grammar, vocabulary or any other topic. Finding out one's learning style is crucial because it's thought to be a useful tool for guiding students, helping them become more focused on their studies, and helping them manage their own learning in line with their learning objectives, according to Moharrer (2012), who referenced Marton (1986) in his research. (in Pouryahya, 2009). According to Gay et al. (2012), quantitative and qualitative research must be carried out using many types of data to analyze different perspectives in order to obtain comprehensive information that cannot be gathered using a single approach in a single study and achieve a deeper understanding.

In fact, on average, there are fifty students in a classroom, which is much more than the ideal classroom size. For this reason, almost all kinds of learners with different learning styles sit together in the same classroom. In Bangladesh, the learners do not know about their learning styles, and the instructors are not also aware of these. The majority of the time, the instructors follow the same methods and techniques when teaching French as a foreign language. As a result, some students are beneficial and learn easily in classrooms, whereas others are deprived and think this language is very difficult to acquire as a second or third language.

That is why, at the beginning of the course, the French instructor should try to identify and categorize several categories of learners with different learning styles. They can emphasize the teaching-learning strategies for visual, group, tactile, and kinesthetic learners, as this research shows that these are the most preferable learning styles for Bangladeshi learners of French as a foreign language. But at the same time, they should not forget the presence of other learners of different learning styles, like auditory and individual, though they are few in number.

Recommendations

As there are four major groups named visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile, and two groups named auditory and individual are minor learning style preferences, some recommendations have been proposed here moderately for these learning style preferences. An instructor can conduct his teaching–learning activities based on the available resources he has and thinking that which learning style will be more effective for which lesson plan. Mixed methodologies and techniques will be better for an individual class. At the time of designing course materials, the teachers should consider the differences in their students' learning styles. A variety of materials should be available for every classroom before starting the lesson. Considering the necessity, these should be utilized properly. The teachers especially the young teachers should be trained regularly to develop their teaching and managerial skills to conduct a class properly. The teaching aids of different learning styles should be different.

Teaching-learning strategies for auditory learners

It is preferable for auditory learners to "use their hearing to learn." They can be therefore benefitted from using audio lectures, talking loudly while studying, having discussions with friends, and so on (Herod, 2004). Instructors should let the French learners work in quiet areas. Verbal discussion and participation in class, audio recording of the reading and writing materials, study in groups, and learning something by storytelling are very effective for them. They shouldn't sit near the windows or doors of the classroom. They should repeat facts closing their eyes and listen to classical French music without lyrics.

Teaching-learning strategies for visual learners

Visual learners require textual or numerical information to be presented to them in order to learn it most effectively (Herod, 2004). Instructors should be sincere in using visual teaching aids for visual demonstration. Handouts should be given before starting the lectures. Various symbols, images, graphs, charts, maps, flashcards, outlines, diagrams etc. can be used during the class. Poster projects or diagraming any topic can be assigned to the participants. Playing short and simple French videos is also very effective. Classical music with lyrics can be played to continue the learning process and to overcome monotony.

Teaching-learning strategies for kinesthetic learners

They should prioritize giving time to outdoor activities and organize field trips and tasks that involve manipulating materials. They will learn more quickly and effectively if they learn something like standing up instead of sitting down, combining study sessions with exercises, using physical movements, swinging the legs etc. They should be involved in hands-on approaches and let them learn through trial and error. They should be given a break for a few minutes at the time of a long class.

Teaching-learning strategies for tactile learners

The teacher should let them work by hand, and take notes tracing keywords while learning. Writing outlines, building models, drawing important diagrams, charts, images, graphs etc. The learners can operate materials at the time of hands-on activities.

Teaching-learning strategies for group learners

Oflaz and Turunc (2012) have revealed that the learners of group learning styles are more motivated and focused what influence their performance. These learners learn fast and well when they study in group or in pair. There are a lot of tasks, like grammatical, sentence making,

solving a problem, and so on, can be done in group of a two or more persons. Out of the classroom, in library or seminar, they can also work together to learn something better and faster.

Teaching-learning strategies for individual learners

If the individual learners do not understand well or learn better in classroom, they can practice the new lesson at home individually using internet or reading alone. They can use their own ideas for study. Before the class, they can try to practice alone the topic what will be discussed in next class.

Conclusion:

To conclude, based on the results of the research, it can be claimed that learners' awareness and designation of learning style are very important. Teaching-learning approaches should be student-centered. In this research, the researcher found different preferences for different learning styles. For these reasons, the instructor should prepare the lesson plans, design course materials, and conduct teaching-learning activities, giving priority to different learners' needs and demands. Students' awareness of their preferred learning style will play a vital role in learning the French language.

Lastly, in Bangladesh, there was no such kind of research for French language before this study. This research has been conducted from an elementary to an advanced level. Different types of French courses are going to be taught in different public universities around the country in the future. Thus, further research is required regarding the accordance between learning styles of different ages and the maximum achievement of learners.

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