Refereed Articles

Social Interaction Learning Styles of Adults Learning English as a Foreign Language

Tanju Deveci

Abstract

This study sought to identify the social interaction learning styles of adults learning a foreign language. The sample was comprised of 321 adult learners—223 females and 98 male—with a mean age of 33.8 years. The data were collected using the Turkish version of the Grasha-Reichmann Learning Style Scales (GRSLSS). Interviews were also held with 22 volunteer learners. The data were analyzed using SPSS statistical software. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages were used to interpret the data. The Kruskal-Wallis one-way analysis of variance, Pearson's chi-square test, and Fisher's exact test were used to compare the data. The findings indicated that the most dominant social interaction learning styles of the respondents were Collaborative and Competitive irrespective of gender and age. The learners from older age groups were found to be less Avoidant. It is concluded that adult learners will benefit from having their awareness raised about their dominant learning styles, as well as other existing ones. Some practical ideas are provided to help match teaching styles with learning styles to create more intrinsic motivation in learners.

Introduction

The rapid developments in information technologies have increased the amount of knowledge available in the so-called "information age." It is also evident that sources of information are widely varied, and information appears in various formats, posing a challenge to information seekers. It also seems much more difficult to anticipate the kind of skills one will need in the future to survive the surge of information and the

Tanju Deveci is Assistant Professor of Communication at the Petroleum Institute of the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

ever-increasing pace of developments. People are expected to be more flexible in their quest for knowledge. They also need to brush up on their existing skills and/or assume new ones to be able to cope with unexpected situations. That is, they will have to keep learning throughout their lives, a concept labelled "lifelong learning" (LLL) in the literature. The European Union (2001) defines LLL as "all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence, within personal, civic, social or employment-related perspectives" (p. 9).

Learning Foreign Languages

A famous proverb states "seek knowledge even as far as China," encouraging people to be active seekers of information sources. The developments in information technology, especially the Internet, have meant that people can attain a variety of information in the comfort of their homes or offices without having to travel. However, this requires them to be able to speak foreign languages to access the knowledge they are seeking and it goes without saying that the English language appears to be the common language people tend to communicate in across the world. One indicator of this is the number of articles and books written in English. This is one reason why the number of institutions that teach English has risen significantly over the years.

The importance of learning a foreign language has been discussed in international documents as well. One such document is the White Paper "Teaching and Learning: Towards the Learning Society" published by the European Union (EU) in 1995. It sets a target of learning at least 3 of the languages spoken in member countries. The EU encourages foreign language learning through the Socrates program, and the LINGUA project. The approach they take to language learning is a lifelong one, which requires people to take active responsibility for their own learning. For this to take place effectively, people need to be fully aware of their characteristics as learners, one aspect of which is their learning style. It is believed that those who are aware of different learning styles and how they can benefit from their dominant learning style(s) will have the means of learning how to learn. This will allow them to become more active in their learning, which will help them aim for higher levels of attainment (Guven, 2004).

Determining students' learning styles will also benefit instructors when planning lessons, deciding on the aims of particular lessons, pro-

moting interaction patterns and selecting the media to use. Learners, on the other hand, can make conscious decisions regarding the best way of going about learning. This will help both learners and instructors to pave the way to lifelong learning.

Adults & Adulthood

It is difficult to come up with a universal definition for the words adult and adulthood. Despite this, investigation into the roots of the word adult do provide some hints. It derives from the past participle of the Latin word adolescence, and means "someone who has grown up" (Onur, 1991, p. 3).

Adulthood can be put into different categories, and one approach to doing this was developed by Levinson and Yale (in Onur, 1991) who studied adult development and analyzed the different stages of life according to psychosocial periods. They identified three main categories of adulthood: Early Adulthood covering ages from (17–40 years old), Middle Age (41–60 years old) and Later Maturity (61 years old and over).

Learning Styles and Adult Learning

Much has been said about how to maximize learning, with a heavy focus on learning styles (Dunn & Dunn, 1979; Felder & Silverman, 1988; Kolb, 1981; Reid, 1987). It is argued that addressing learners' preferred learning styles increases motivation, and therefore, success. However, the emphasis on learning styles has been a target of much criticism as well. Those who are skeptical of learning styles tend to argue that determining one's learning styles does not necessarily say much about the efficiency of learning as a result of learner engagement in different activities or tasks. Stahl (1999) asserts that matching learners' reading styles, for instance, with purposefully developed reading programs does not improve their reading skills. He also says that low reliability of learning style inventories reduces their credibility, and that accommodating different learning styles in a class could easily cause chaos. Also, Cartney (2000) points out that learning styles can be subject to change due to the differing contexts in which learning takes place, causing a potential problem for the credibility of learning styles.

Fleming and Baume (2006), however, note that learning style inventories can serve as a springboard to start discussions between learners and teachers on the idea of effective and meaningful learning, especially with those who need more guidance. It would be important for learn-

ers to take an active role in their own learning through constant reflection. They acknowledge that one inventory, per se, cannot help us fully understand how individuals learn and that some learners can be quite conscious about the ways in which they learn best and therefore may not necessarily need an inventory of learning styles.

The points raised by Fleming and Baume (2006) strengthen the case for learning styles despite their potential shortcomings. It can be argued that talking to learners about learning in multiple ways would cause no harm whatsoever. And when it is the question of adult learners who may have not been involved in purposeful learning activities for a while, any discussion on learning and individual learners' personality types affecting their preferred way(s) of interaction with content, materials, peers, and educators would be meaningful. It is well-documented that adults' perception of learning is affected by various factors such as their feelings, interests, and past experiences. These may potentially facilitate learning, but may inhibit it unless enough attention is paid to these factors. Indeed, these factors will also determine adults' preferred interaction patterns and therefore can be linked to emotional aspects of learning, which will have serious effects on their attitude towards individual and group activities in learning environments.

Looking specifically at language learning, it is clear that people are likely to learn English for various reasons. This variety necessitates that language learning be approached in social contexts where participant learning styles are established based on a social interaction model. However, there seems to be limited interest in learning styles based on this model.

Grasha and Hurska-Reichmann were among the first educators to take an alternative approach, analyzing learning styles in terms of learners' attitudes to classroom activities and to the interaction patterns among learners and between learners and instructors. Grasha was greatly affected by Jung's personality types and started working on a new learning styles model based on his personal classroom observations. This work indicated that there were a variety of preferred interaction patterns influenced by learners' personality traits, which, in turn, determined their learning styles in social contexts. With such an outlook on learning experience, Grasha (2006) redefined learning styles as "personal qualities that influence a student's ability to acquire information, to interact with peers and the teacher, and otherwise to participate in learning experiences" (p. 41).

Grasha later worked in collaboration with Hurska-Reichmann to develop an instrument to determine these preferred patterns and to categorize them. This initiative resulted in a tool that they called the Grasha-Reichmann Student Learning Style Scales (GRSLSS), which draws attention to the social dynamics of learning and puts learning styles into the following six categories (Grasha, 1996, pp. 128-169):

a) Competitive: Competitive learners wish to get better results than their classmates. They like to be the center of attention, and want their achievements to be recognized by others. They like to have leadership roles. In general, they have high motivation for learning. Such learners, however, may not be good at interactive activities.

b) Collaborative: These learners believe that they can learn best by sharing their ideas and skills with others. They collaborate with their teachers and wish to work with other learners in small groups. They prefer seminars, and enjoy being involved in projects; hence, they can contribute to the development of necessary skills in team work. They are, however, likely to have problems working alone and dealing with competition.

c) Avoidant: Avoidant learners are not very interested in the subject matter, and avoid taking active roles. They also tend to work alone. What is going on in the classroom may bore them. They do not like to be asked questions. One positive aspect about them is that they can avoid stress-arousing situations. These learners tend to take negative feedback as an indication of lack of success.

d) Participant: These learners enjoy going to classes and participate in classroom activities. They are willing to take up extra-curricular activities. They like discussions. They may, however, be too interested in other learners' needs at the expense of their own.

e) Dependent: Dependent learners do not appear to have much intellectual interest. They also tend to get by with the minimum requirements. They want to be directed in what they are supposed to do. These kinds of learners are interested in having a clear road-map with defined expectations and due dates. They cannot tolerate ambiguities and therefore may have difficulty in developing skills necessary for self-directed learning.

f)   Independent: These learners think for themselves and have higher levels of self-confidence. They like to learn the content that they find important. They also like to work independently at their own pace. Assignments that encourage them to think independently make them happy. They also like student-centered classrooms. They tend to have the necessary skills for self-directed learning. Despite this, they may lack skills needed for group projects and team work. In addition, they may have difficulty asking for help and guidance when they come across problems.

It would be wrong to assume that people have only one of these learning styles. Some learners may have more than one, but with one being dominant. Furthermore, it cannot be said that one learning style is better than the others or that a learning style should be eliminated for the good of an individual learner or his/her classmates. Each of the six styles has its rightful place in life. What needs to be considered is how learners' learning styles affect them positively or negatively.

Grasha and Hurska-Reichmann carried out their studies on learning styles with university students, but this does not mean that their approach does not apply to adult learners in both formal and informal settings. Since adult learners are known to come to the learning environment with relatively fixed personality traits and expectations, approaching their learning styles from the perspective of a social interaction model seems to be of particular importance. Adult learners will expect their personality traits and expectations to be recognized by both their teachers and other learners. Otherwise, they will be very likely to drop out.

This current study aims to identify the learning styles of Turkish learners of English as a foreign language. In the Turkish context, there are various institutions that offer adult education services, including are state and private universities, civic organizations, evening language schools, and adult education centers. This study hopes to provide a fuller description of learner types by investigating the issue in both private and government institutions in the Turkish context.

With the above mentioned general aim, this study addresses the following questions:

1)   What are the social interaction learning styles of Turkish adult learners of English as a foreign language?

2) Are there any similarities or differences between the social interaction learning styles of female and male adult learners?
3) Do the social interaction learning styles of Turkish adult learners of English as a foreign language differ according to age?

Method

The Respondents

This study includes a total number of 321 Turkish adult learners studying English as a foreign language. Of these 321 learners, 199 (62%) were from Istanbul Kadikoy Adult Education Center, 68 (21%) were from Sabanci University, and 54 (17%) were from Istanbul Kent English Private Language School.

The majority of participants (69 %) were female. It is also important to note that the ratio of female learners (80%) at Kadikoy Adult Education Center was the highest compared to Sabanci University and Kent English (47% and 59%, respectively).

The ages of the particpants varied between 19 and 82 years, with a mean age of 34 years. The majority of the respondents (71%) belonged to the early adult stage, 27% belonged to the middle age stage and 2% belonged to the later maturity stage.

Data Collection and Analysis

The Turkish version of the Grasha-Reichmann Student Learning Style Scales (GRSLSS), translated by Zereyak (2006), was used to determine the social interaction learning styles of the participants. Zereyak's permission to use the Turkish version was obtained through e-mail. Zereyak tested the validity and reliability of it. The instrument was translated into Turkish by three different education experts. The piloting of the instrument revealed that the Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of the instrument was .83.

In this study, semi-structured interviews in Turkish were conducted with a sample of 22 consenting learners in order to record the respondents' thoughts and feelings about their preferred learning styles. It was felt that 22 respondents would supply varied and detailed accounts for the purpose of this study. The 22 consenting learners were interviewed by the researcher in their native language for about 20 minutes. All interviews were recorded with the permission of the learners. The respondents were told that their names would not be revealed in any part of the

research process. After the interviews, the recordings were transcribed by the researcher himself. The interview transcripts were coded according to the characteristics of the six social interaction learning styles. One independent expert in the field was asked to verify the accuracy of the codes in the six categories. Mays and Pope (1995) state that when transcripts are assessed by additional researchers and the agreement between them is compared, the analysis of qualitative data is enhanced.

Responses chosen to use in the display of the data were translated into English by the researcher himself, and the accuracy of the translations was checked by an expert in translation studies.

The data gathered using the GRSLSS—a five-point Likert-type data gathering instrument—were analyzed using a three-level scale. Table 1 shows the scale for each learning style.

Table 1
Grasha-Reichmann Student Learning Style Scale

Learning Styles	Low	Average	High
Independent	1.0-2.7	2.9-3.8	3.9-5.0
Avoidant	1.0-1.8	1.9-3.1	3.2-5.0
Collaborative	1.0-2.7	2.8-3.4	3.5-5.0
Dependent	1.0-2.9	3.0-4.0	4.1-5.0
Competetive	1.0-1.7	1.8-2.8	4.2-5.0
Participant	1.0-3-0	3.1-4.1	4.2-5.0

The data gathered were analyzed using SPSS (Version 18.0) (SPSS Inc., Chicago, USA). The Kruskal–Wallis One-Way Analysis of Variance was used to investigate the relationship between social interaction learning styles and the other variables. Also, an A-Square Test and a Fisher Exact Test were used.

Results and Discussion

Social Interaction Learning Styles:

Data on the social interaction learning styles of the respondents, which were analyzed according to GRSLSS Scale, can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2
Social Interaction Learning Styles of Adults Learning English as a
Foreign Language

Learning Styles	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
Independent	321	1.4	5.0	3.540	.6039
Avoidant	321	1.3	4.5	2.304	.5331
Collaborative	321	1.3	5.0	3.797	.6151
Dependent	321	1.4	5.0	3.926	.4981
Competetive	321	1.1	5.0	3.085	.7078
Participant	321	1.9	4.9	3.657	.5627

Responses to the first research question reveal that the respondents, in general, seemed to have Collaborative (mean = 3.797) and Competitive (mean = 3.085) learning styles. This finding was supported by the interviews carried out with some of the learners. They appeared to enjoy classroom activities that lent themselves to team-work. One learner at the age of 38 said:

"It is interesting to have small group discussions. I feel I can speak my mind easier that way."

Another learner (aged 37) expressed the pleasure he got from getting involved in group- work:

"It is nice to work with my friends because they sometimes help un derstand things better."

Competitive learners, on the other hand, seemed to appreciate being told the aims of the lesson in advance. One common example was the following:

"I am at more ease if I study and learn the grammar before coming to class. In this way, I can check my own understanding against the teacher's explanation," (a female learner aged 27).

The same learner also said:

> "This helps me understand English better and get better exam results than my classmates."

This seems to suggest that she tends to use more than one learning style: one she had an average score for, namely Independent, and one she had a higher score for, namely Competitive. It is evident from her responses that she is both an Independent and Competitive learner.

Furthermore, the findings revealed that Avoidant (mean = 2.304), Independent (mean = 3.540), Dependent (mean = 3.926), and Participant (mean = 3.657) learning styles were found to have average scores.

It might be interesting to see how the learning styles of the participants from the three different institutions compare to each other. The results of this comparison can be seen in Table 3.

The finding that more of the respondents from Kadikoy Adult Education Center belonged to higher age groups as compared to the ones from Kent English Private Language School may account for the difference in the learning styles. What one of the few learners in the later maturity age group at Kadikoy Adult Education Center said is a good example of their Participant learning style:

> "I know I am not young and I cannot really learn as well as the other young ones, but I am here to make friends and the only way to do is to be active in class. Otherwise, people won't take you serious. It is not a big problem if they laugh at my mistakes."

Another learner (aged 44) at the Center said:

> "Nobody is forcing me to be here. So if I am here, I must get the most out of it and I can do this by answering more of my teacher's questions.'

The examples above seem to signal the occurrences of participatory behavior at Kadikoy Adult Education Center.

Analysis of the data gathered from Kent English Private Language School and Sabanci University School of Languages, on the other hand, showed that the difference between the Participant learning style scores of learners at these institutions was not statistically significant. Also, the Competitive learning style score of the adult learners from Kadikoy

Table 3
Social Interaction Learning Styles According to Institutions

Institions & Learning Styles	n	Min.	Max.	Average	SD
Kadikoy					
Independent	199	1.8	5.0	3.579	.5840
Avoidant	199	1.3	4.5	2.339	.5799
Collaborative	199	2.2	5.0	3.823	.6137
Dependent	199	2.5	4.9	3.978	.4791
Competetive	199	1.4	5.0	3.167	.6737
Participant	199	2.2	4.9	3.714	.5428
Sabanci					
Independent	68	1.8	4.6	3.415	.5951
Avoidant	68	1.5	3.2	2.253	.3663
Collaborative	68	1.7	4.8	3.722	.5474
Dependent	68	1.4	5.0	3.835	.5361
Competetive	68	1.4	4.3	2.965	.6669
Participant	68	2.0	4.7	3.632	.5340
Kent					
Independent	54	1.4	4.9	3.552	.6737
Avoidant	54	1.3	4.4	2.241	.6547
Collaborative	54	1.3	5.0	3.798	.6995
Dependent	54	2.5	4.8	3.848	.5001
Competetive	54	1.1	4.6	2.935	.8061
Participant	54	1.9	4.8	3.478	.6362

Adult Education Center appeared to be higher than those of the learners from Kent English Private Language School ($p = 0.040$) and Sabanci University ($p = 0.046$).. Both of these difference were statistically significant

The above finding indicates that the learners at Kadikoy Adult Education Center tended to have a stronger Competitive learning style. Some of the interviews held with the respondents from this Center revealed that certain learners believed that they needed to be a step ahead of others in order to be able to more easily find a job. This can be clearly seen in the following words from a 33-year old female respondent:

"When I apply for a job, they always put us to a test, and I must show that my English level is better than the other applicants."

Another female learner expressed her desire to excel in her class by saying,

"I feel really good when my exam results are the best. This shows me I am learning well."

Social Interaction Learning Styles and Gender
The results of the data analysis in response to the second research question can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4
Social Interaction Learning Styles According to Gender

Gender & Learning Styles	n	Min.	Max.	Average	SD
Female					
Independent	227	1.4	4.9	3.560	.6011
Avoidant	227	1.3	4.5	2.316	.5594
Collaborative	227	1.3	5.0	3.802	.6253
Dependent	227	1.9	5.0	3.958	.4880
Competetive	227	1.1	5.0	3.107	.6984
Participant	227	1.9	4.9	3.681	.5547
Male					
Independent	94	1.8	5.0	3.491	.6111
Avoidant	94	1.3	3.6	2.274	.4651
Collaborative	94	1.9	5.0	3.786	.5929
Dependent	94	1.4	4.9	3.850	.5166
Competetive	94	1.4	4.6	3.033	.7314
Participant	94	2.0	4.8	3.597	.5800

Table 4 reveals that female learners had average scores for Independent (mean = 3.560), Avoidant (mean = 2.316), Dependent (mean = 3.958) and Participant (mean = 3.681) learning styles, while they had

high scores for Collaborative (mean = 3.802) and Competitive (mean = 3.107) learning styles. Similarly, male learners had average scores for Independent (mean = 3.491), Avoidant (mean = 2.274), Dependent (mean = 3.850) and Participant (mean = 3.597) learning styles but high scores for Collaborative (mean = 3.786) and Competitive (mean = 3.033) learning styles. This suggests that the female and male learners had similar learning styles.

This finding was supported by data from interviews with some of the learners, who were asked whether or not female and male learners differed in their preferences of classroom activities. Sample replies can be seen below.

"I don't really think so. My male friends also speak as much as I do in classroom discussions, and sometimes even more than me," (a female learner aged 32).

"Sometimes the teacher puts me in groups with male students and we just work fine together. They do not leave the work to us. But I have to say their hand-writing is not so good," (a female learner aged 44).

Despite this, some of the differing opinions collected at the School of Languages, Sabanci University are shown in the samples below.

"The girls are really good at doing homework. Some of them do more than what the teacher asks us to do. I cannot really be bothered to do that much work," (a male learner aged 26).

"When the teacher asks for volunteers to do presentations, it is generally girls who step forward first," (a male learner aged 33).

The above examples seem to suggest that female learners may be more independent than male learners.

No statistically significant difference was found between female and male learners' Independent ($p = 0.327$), Avoidant ($p = 0.968$), Collaborative ($p = 0.756$), Dependent ($p = 0.060$), Competitive ($p = 0.397$, and Participant ($p = 0.220$) learning styles. This finding is different from Fathaigh's (2000) finding that suggests that male learners' dominant

style tended to be more competitive. Hamidah, Sarina, and Jusoff (n.d) also studied the social interaction learning styles of undergraduate students and found that although there was not a statistically significant difference between learning styles of the two genders, female learners had higher scores for Collaborative, Participant, Dependent and Competitive learning styles than did their male counterparts. Similarly, Zelazek (1986) and Yazıcı (2005) found that female learners had higher scores for the Participant learning style. However, Budakoglu (2011) found that the Competitive learning style score of female and male undergraduate medical students was low, but the Avoidant learning style of the male students had a higher score than the female students. Likewise, a recent study by Sural (2008) revealed that male learners had higher scores for this learning style while female learners had higher scores for Dependent and Collaborative learning styles.

Social Interaction Learning Styles and Age

The analysis of the data in terms of the different age groups yielded the results in Table 5.

The participatory orientation to learning as age increases was also evident in some of the responses of those who agreed to an interview. Sample statements include:

> "It is nice to have the opportunity to say a few things about my life in the lessons," (a male learner aged 53).

> "I like it when the teacher asks us to stand up and talk about an issue for a few minutes,"(a female learner aged 49).

Taken together, these data suggest that learners in older age groups tend to be more active in their lessons and appreciate activities where they can contribute their thoughts and feelings on certain issues. Knowles (1980) states that one of the assumptions that underlines adult learning is that an adult "accumulates a growing reservoir of experience that becomes an increasing resource for learning," (p. 39). This assumption implies that adult learners will be more motivated to learn when they can relate the topic to their experiences. With regard to the Participant learning style, it can be argued that given the chance to reflect on their experiences, feelings, and beliefs, learners will be more willing to participate in classroom activities.

Table 5
Social Interaction Learning Styles According to Age

Age & Learning Styles	n	Min.	Max.	Average	SD
17-40					
Independent	229	1.8	4.9	3.552	.5776
Avoidant	229	1.3	4.5	2.312	.5337
Collaborative	229	1.3	5.0	3.787	.6055
Dependent	229	1.4	5.0	3.918	.4898
Competetive	229	1.1	5.0	3.098	.7261
Participant	229	2.0	4.9	3.614	.5394
41-60					
Independent	86	1.4	5.0	3.481	.6743
Avoidant	86	1.3	3.7	2.291	.5388
Collaborative	86	2.2	5.0	3.827	. 6297
Dependent	86	2.5	4.9	3.945	.5302
Competetive	86	1.5	4.6	3.030	.6707
Participant	86	1.9	4.9	3.733	.6046
61+					
Independent	6	3.0	4.3	3.800	.5215
Avoidant	6	1.6	3.0	2.150	.5206
Collaborative	6	2.8	5.0	3.850	.8597
Dependent	6	3.4	4.6	3.933	.4320
Competetive	6	2.6	4.0	3.333	.5715
Participant	6	3.4	4.9	4.183	.5636

Conclusions and Recommendations

The results of this study suggest that the characteristics of adult learners may differ from those of younger learners in terms of their preferred social interaction modes. Older adult learners in this study were found to be less Avoidant and more Participant compared to younger learners. This finding needs to be taken into consideration in planning adult learning programs where there are older learners. Such learners

need to be provided with opportunities to participate more actively in different stages of program development, from planning to evaluation. Should they be given the chance to make use of the life experiences they have accumulated, they will be more likely to adopt independent learning styles and therefore become more self-directed learners (Knowles,1980).

The adult learners that participated in this study were not found to have low scores for any of the six learning styles, which may suggest that a group of adult learners might be more heterogeneous in terms of their preferred learning styles. Having said this, it is worth exploring possible similarities and differences according to various factors such as age and gender. This is mainly because the vast spectrum of people that benefit from adult education activities represent a wide spectrum of learner characteristics, as shown by the results of this study. This will have implications on how to plan and execute education activities offered to adults. To illustrate, this study found that more of the participants in all three institutions were female. Similarly, the studies carried out by Okcabol (1994) and Ural (2007) also showed that the number of female learners participating in adult education services in Turkey was higher than that of males. Considering gender's impact on learning styles at institutions offering adult education services may enable educators to formulate alternative plans. This current study, for instance, found that both male and female, learners exhibited the qualities of collaboration and competitiveness, and therefore both would probably enjoy being involved in group and pair-work activities and tasks that would require them to engage in cooperation with others. Given their competitive nature, they might also enjoy competing against each other in teams.

It is also important to consider the reasons why adults wish to learn a foreign language. This will have implications for the types of interaction patterns and materials used in the classroom. It will also help match such factors with learning styles. For example, role-play can be an effective technique for learners with a Participant learning style wishing to learn the target language for socializing. Writing articles for competitions can, on the other hand, best address the needs of people with Avoidant and Competitive styles preparing for a writing exam. While it is not possible to address each participant and every individual learning style, the necessity of trying to offer learners a spectrum of learning experiences from which they can pick and choose cannot be ruled out.

Adult educators would benefit from finding out what their own dominant learning styles are and how these appear to affect their teaching

styles. It would be worth getting continuous feedback from adult learners regarding their preferences for educators' teaching styles based on their own learning styles. This is not to say that educators should give up their teaching styles altogether; nevertheless, it is important to note that certain teaching styles can address more than one type of learning style. Grasha (1996) identified some teaching styles which can be matched with different learning styles. For instance, in order to address Dependent, Participant and Competitive learners, language teachers with expert and formal authority styles can:

- have students take quizzes and exams emphasizing grades
- invite colleagues or outside visitors your learners can interview
- teach grammar and vocabulary in a direct way
- start classroom discussions that might be teacher-centered
- assign individual term projects/papers
- have one-on-one tutorials where you address individual need and talk about learner progress.

On the other hand, in order to address Participant, Dependent and Competitive learners, teachers with model, expert, and formal authority styles can:

- model language needed to perform certain tasks
- make room for drilling exercises
- ask learners what other different ways problems can be solved
- have learners personalize language and content they are learning by asking them to give examples of own experiences
- guide learners when they are doing exercises and carrying out tasks

Dependent, Participant and Competitive learners might enjoy learning if teachers with facilitator, model and expert styles

- assign case studies where students have to analyze decision making processes
- assign stronger learners to teach certain grammar points or vocabulary items
- let interested students prepare materials such as songs to share with the class

- ask learners riddles they need to try to solve thinking critically
- have panel discussions assigning students individual roles
- have students fill in spider-grams of ideas, vocabulary items
- provide options for Dependent learners
- bring in role-plays where learners have to use some target grammar and vocabulary

Finally, in order to address learners with Independent, Collaborative and Participant learning styles, teachers with delegator, facilitator and expert styles can:

- ask learners to keep journals where they need to use certain target language items
- put learners into teams to carry out a survey and present the results to their classmates
- have your learners do jigsaw reading or listening
- ask learners to respond to a controversial issue in writing
- ask learners to find out about certain topics and/or grammar points doing some research on the Internet and present their findings to their classmates
- put learners into pairs to do mutual dictation
- assign learners real-life tasks which require them to find some foreigners to interview

Bear in mind that some mismatch between teaching and learning styles can be stimulating and would be especially beneficial for learners with the Avoidant learning style. This is because they might be encouraged to be participative and independent under the guidance of an educator with more of a participatory teaching style. For instance. Grasha (1996) says that being exposed to a mixture of familiar and unfamiliar methods of learning would decrease the tension learners may face when adopting new ways of learning. However, adult educators need to avoid constant mismatches even if it is for good intentions; otherwise, adult learners, for whom participation in education is mainly voluntary, might be likely to drop out.

It is clear that learners with an Independent learning style will be at an advantage as they easily become lifelong learners. Therefore, adults who do not seem to be independent learners can be encouraged to challenge themselves in this direction. Deveci (2007) also suggests that it is

important to respect the characteristics of adult learners, starting with the level they are at but helping them discover alternative ways of learning and moving from a dependent mode to a more independent and partici-pative one.

Despite some contrary evidence (Flamez, 2010), it is important to note that research has shown that learning styles might be malleable (Bu-dakoglu, Demirli & Babadogan, 2012; Meeuwsen, King & Pederson, 2005; Novak, Shah, Wilson, Lawson & Salzman, 2006). It would be necessary to monitor adult learners' use and development of learning styles and have one-on-one meetings where progress is discussed with individuals learners.

In contexts where there are learners from different backgrounds, adult educators might consider different patterns of learning styles in the design of their instructions. Certain nationalities, such as the Japanese, are known to value silence as an expression of politeness. It may be mis-leading to assume that quieter learners possess Avoidant learning styles as they may need some time to reveal the different ways in which they like to learn. Therefore, identifying learners' preferred learning styles would give adult educators important hints regarding how to break the ice in multicultural contexts and promote greater understanding among learners.

When the wide spectrum of learning styles that adults appear to have is considered, some educators may feel that determining each and every learner's learning style is laborious and, therefore, they may eas-ily shy away from it. However, the readily available online version of GRSLSS (at http://academic.cuesta.edu/wholehealth/disted/ls_invent. htm) makes it quite practical. Educators can easily access the results via email sent from the site. Learners are also provided with the breakdown of their results and can read explanations for each learning style, which makes this instrument user-friendly and encourages learner autonomy. This current study is descriptive in nature, and it is hoped that it has been able to describe the characteristics of its population in terms of their preferred learning styles. Given the malleable nature of learning styles as discussed above, further research needs to be conducted into learners' adaptations of their learning styles and whether or not it really is pos-sible to encourage adult learners to migrate towards the types of learning styles considered to promote more self-directed and therefore lifelong learning. In doing so, the effects of teaching style and course materials used can be investigated. Researchers may also consider doing studies into learners' mitigation of learning styles in different contexts.

There is no doubt that the old phrase "learning from cradle to grave" will always hold true. Nevertheless, for this to happen, what needs to be borne in mind is the quality of learning and the intrinsic motivation to learn, especially for adults who take on a variety of responsibilities in response to their developmental tasks. Addressing adult learners' social interaction learning styles, with their particular reasons for participation in mind, is expected to increase their chances of becoming lifelong learners, and studies dedicated to increasing awareness of effective learning will help learners become more able to stand on their own feet.

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