Graduation Project Document Submitted to Department of General Education in Partial Fulfillment for the Requirements for the Degree of A Bachelor of Education in English language teaching

Learning Styles of English BA Students at Cihan University-Erbil

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2024 – 2025

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Dedication

To Our Beloved Families

Acknowledgement

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to those who have supported me throughout the completion of this graduation project. First and foremost, I am sincerely thankful to my supervisor, Dr. Samrand Amini, for his invaluable guidance, encouragement, and expertise, which have been instrumental in shaping this research. His insightful feedback and unwavering support have greatly enriched my academic journey.

I also extend my appreciation to Dr. Ahmed Abd Aoun, Head of the General Education/ELT Department, for fostering an inspiring academic environment and providing the resources necessary to pursue this study. His leadership and dedication to the department have been a source of motivation.

Special thanks go to my examiners, …….. and …….., for their thorough evaluation and constructive comments, which have strengthened the quality of this work. Their time and expertise are deeply appreciated.

Finally, I am grateful to my family, friends, and peers for their constant encouragement and understanding, which have sustained me throughout this endeavor. This project would not have been possible without the collective support of all these individuals.

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Analysis of Variance ..... ANOVA

Bachelor of Arts ..... BA

English as a Foreign Language ..... EFL

English Language Teaching ..... ELT

General Education Department ..... GED

Learning Style Preferences ..... LSPs

Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire ..... PLSPQ

Second Language L2

Second Language Acquisition ..... SLA

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences ..... SPSS

Abstract

Abstract

This study investigates the learning style preferences of 100 English BA students at Cihan University-Erbil to inform effective English Language Teaching (ELT) pedagogy. Utilizing Reid's (1984) Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire, the research examines preferences across six learning styles: Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic, Tactile, Group, and Individual. Data, analyzed using SPSS version 25, reveal a strong preference for Kinesthetic (M = 4.12, 32% dominant) and Tactile (M = 3.98, 24% dominant) styles, followed by Visual (M = 3.87, 18% dominant), Auditory (M = 3.76, 12% dominant), and Individual (M = 3.61, 10% dominant), with Group learning as a minor preference (M = 3.42, 4% dominant). Significant correlations include a positive Kinesthetic-Tactile relationship ($r = 0.58$, $p < 0.01$) and a negative Group-Individual correlation ($r = -0.56$, $p < 0.01$). No significant differences were found across gender or year of study, though trends suggest increasing Individual and decreasing Group preferences over time. These findings, supported by reliable questionnaire data (Cronbach's alpha > 0.7), align with regional EFL studies emphasizing active learning but highlight a unique low Group preference. The results advocate for ELT curricula prioritizing hands-on, multisensory activities while balancing individualized approaches, offering insights for enhancing English language acquisition in similar contexts.

Key Words: *Learning styles, English Language Teaching (ELT), EFL learners, Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire.*

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1. Background of the Study

In recent decades, English language education has gained paramount importance globally as English continues to serve as the primary language for international communication, academic publishing, and professional advancement (Rose & Galloway, 2019). This trend is particularly evident in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, where English language instruction has become increasingly prioritized in higher education curricula (Ahmed & Mohammed, 2022). At institutions like Cihan University-Erbil, English departments are tasked with preparing students to become proficient English users and effective language educators in a rapidly evolving educational landscape.

The success of English language teaching and learning depends on numerous factors, among which the individual characteristics of learners play a crucial role. Learning styles represent one of the most significant individual difference variables that influence how students approach, process, and retain information (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2022).

The Kurdistan Region of Iraq represents a unique cultural and educational context where research on learning styles remains limited. While studies have explored learning styles in various international settings, few have specifically examined the learning preferences of Kurdish university students studying English (Abdelrahman, 2022). This gap is particularly significant given the region's distinctive educational history, cultural values, and pedagogical traditions, which may influence how students approach language learning.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Despite the growing recognition of learning styles as important factors in language education, there is a significant lack of research addressing the learning style preferences of English BA students in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, particularly at Cihan University-Erbil. This study addresses these problems by investigating the learning style preferences of English BA students at Cihan University-Erbil, providing data that can inform more responsive and effective educational practices in this specific context.

1.2. Significance of the Study

This study on the learning styles of English BA students at Cihan University-Erbil holds significant value for multiple stakeholders in the educational ecosystem, including students, instructors, curriculum developers, and the institution itself.

For students, awareness of their own learning style preferences can enhance metacognitive knowledge and self-regulation. For instructors in the English department at Cihan University-Erbil, this study provides valuable insights that can guide pedagogical decision-making. Additionally, knowing the range of learning preferences represented in their classrooms enables instructors to purposefully incorporate varied teaching methods that help students develop flexibility across different learning modalities.

1.3. Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study is to identify and analyze the learning style preferences of undergraduate students pursuing Bachelor of Arts degrees in English at Cihan University-Erbil. By investigating these preferences, the study aims to provide empirical data that can inform more responsive and effective educational practices within this specific context.

By achieving these objectives, the study aims to enhance understanding of how English BA students at Cihan University-Erbil approach learning and to provide actionable insights that can improve the quality and effectiveness of English language teaching and learning within this institution.

1.4. Research Question

This study is guided by the following research question and associated hypotheses:

Research Question: What are the learning styles of the English BA students at Cihan University-Erbil?

1.5. Definition of Key Terms

Learning Styles: The characteristic cognitive, affective, and physiological behaviors that serve as relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive, interact with, and respond to the learning environment (Keefe, 1979, as cited in Jarvis, 2018). In the context of this study, learning styles specifically refer to students preferred sensory modalities for receiving and processing information.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

2. Introduction

This chapter provides a literature review on learning styles and learners' achievements on different tests. Learning styles analysis has become one of the major issues in education in response to the problems of different learning approaches. Learning style is also one of the recently analyzed subjects in foreign language learning and teaching since teachers adjust their instruction to the learner's styles.

2.1. Theoretical Framework

In the last few decades, the role of the English language around the world as the lingua franca for economic, scientific, technological, and political exchange has grown rapidly. The term lingua franca means a contact language used among people who do not share a first language and is commonly understood to mean a second language of its speakers (Jenkins, 2007). Due to the international spread of English that has been growing since the latter part of 20th century, English is frequently the mutual language of choice in settings such as conferences, business meetings, and political gatherings.

A variety of factors affecting the success in the target language have been related to the characteristics of the learner, such as language learning aptitude, attitude and motivation and personality variables (Bialystok, 1981). Recent work by Oxford and Amerstorfer (2018) has expanded this understanding, showing how sociocultural contexts interact with individual learner characteristics to influence language acquisition outcomes. It has also been accepted that a learner is an individual with his or her unique differences such as age, gender, learning needs, abilities, feelings, styles, strategies, etc. Apparently, all these factors would have considerable effect on language learning (Oxford, 2017; Pawlak, 2022).

2.1.2. Development of Learning Style Paradigms

Researchers have developed various learning styles paradigms by investigating the learning process in terms of individuals' accustomed ways of learning. Therefore, the field of learning styles has long been in the multi-paradigmatic stage (Keefe and Ferrell, 1990). Interestingly, Dörnyei and Ryan (2022) observe that despite decades of research, learning styles remain a contested area without a unified theoretical framework, with new approaches continuously emerging. In a logical progression, the common elements of all paradigms could be combined into a cohesive theory: a state-of-the-art learning styles paradigm. In reality, however, they all may be said to have evolved from three precursors: 1) the personality theory, 2) the information processing aspect of cognitive style research, and 3) research on aptitude-treatment interaction.

2.1.2.1. Personality Theory

Personality is expected to exert an important influence on learners' interests, aptitudes, and goals since personality is inseparably related to intelligence and cognitive style. According to Chastain (1988), persistence, impulsivity, anxiety, defensiveness, dependency, tolerance, aggressiveness, etc. are all personality characteristics of individuals in school. Learning styles are interwoven with the affective, temperamental, and motivational structures of the total human personality. In this view, a core personality structure is manifested in the various levels and domains of psychological functioning (in Keefe & Ferrell, 1990).

Recent research by Dörnyei and Ryan (2022) has further emphasized the role of personality traits in language learning, suggesting that core personality structures continue to impact how learners process and retain information in language learning contexts. Building on this, Dewaele (2022) has identified strong correlations between personality traits such as openness to experience and willingness to communicate in the L2 classroom, which directly influence learning style preferences.

2.1.3. What are Learning Styles?

Since the increase in studies of second language acquisition (SLA), the study of individual differences has become an important concern in research. Various theories and research on studying language and people's needs to learn other languages as foreign languages has been on the best way to teach people. Many studies sought to find ways of teaching effectively. Various methods of teaching like Audiolingual Approach, Direct Method, and Communicative Approach have been developed and applied in various teaching settings and were criticized or praised for various reasons (Celce Murcia, 1991). In order to understand the term 'Learning Style', a wide range of definitions are indicated below to shed light onto the study.

2.1.3.1. Definitions of Learning Styles

In reading through the literature on learning style, one is immediately struck by the range of definitions that have been adopted to describe this concept. These definitions range from concerns about preferred sensory modalities (e.g. visual, auditory, tactile, etc.) to descriptions of personality characteristics that have implications for behavior patterns in learning situations (e.g. the need for structure versus flexibility). Others have focused attention on cognitive information processing patterns.

"Learning style" is a term used to describe identifiable individual approaches to learning situations and claimed to account for some of the differences in how students learn. Keefe and Ferrell (1990, p.59)

define learning style as "affective, and psychological traits that are relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive, interact with, and respond to the learning environment".

More contemporary definitions have emerged as well. Jarvis (2018, p.145) defines learning styles as "preferred approaches to learning that reflect deeper patterns of cognitive and personality-based responses to learning environments and challenges." Similarly, Wong and Nunan (2021, p.78) characterize learning styles as "the natural, habitual, and preferred ways of absorbing, processing, and retaining new information and skills which persist regardless of teaching methods or content area."

2.1.4. Learning Style and Individual Differences

As it was asserted before, no two people learn exactly alike, but are students completely dissimilar in the ways they approach learning? Or, in other words, are there any similarities in terms of how different groups of students learn, and what can teachers do about these similarities and differences? Researchers in this area have termed these similarities *learning styles* and have developed instructional programs to meet the needs of different groups of students. Learning styles are usually defined as cognitive, affective, and physiological traits of learners as they interact in the classroom environment.

More recent frameworks by Pawlak and Mystkowska-Wiertelak (2021) have expanded our understanding of individual differences in language learning to include not only cognitive and personality factors but also emotional intelligence and self-regulation capacity as key variables affecting learning style preferences. Varasteh et al. (2016) further highlight that individual differences in learning styles significantly impact second language vocabulary acquisition strategies and outcomes.

2.1.5. Classroom Learning Styles: Contemporary Approaches

The most popular approaches to applying learning styles in classrooms were formulated by Dunn (1983) and Dunn & Dunn (1993). More recently, Jarvis (2018) has refined these approaches to address contemporary learning environments, incorporating dimensions related to digital literacy and online learning preferences. Contemporary researchers continue to investigate key questions about how learning styles manifest in classroom settings:

1. Modality: Does the student learn better through listening or reading?
2. Structure/Support: Does the learner need high structure, or is he or she an independent learner?
3. Individual/Group: Does the learner work best independently or in groups?
4. Motivation: Is the student self-motivated, or does he or she require external rewards?

5. Environment: How do light, temperature, noise, and time of day influence learning? (Jarvis, 2018; Wang & Chen, 2022)

Wang and Chen (2022) have added additional dimensions to consider: 6. Digital interaction: Does the learner prefer digital or analog learning materials? 7. Pacing preference: Does the learner prefer self-paced or structured-pace learning? 8. Feedback style: What type and frequency of feedback best supports the learner?

2.1.6. Using Learning Style Theories in Classrooms

How can learning style theories be used in classrooms? According to Guild (1990), there are broadly three different approaches to applying learning style theories in the classroom. One is focusing on the individual; know yourself and the other person you are interacting with. Guild regards "personal awareness" as an important aspect of learning style theory. In her opinion, "it is very important for educators when working with other people to understand both their own and the other's perspectives" (cited in Brandt, 1990, p.10).

Zhang and Bonk (2021) have advocated for a balanced approach that both acknowledges individual learning preferences while encouraging style flexibility. Their research demonstrates that while initial instruction matched to preferred styles can build confidence, gradually introducing varied instructional approaches helps students develop adaptability—a critical skill for lifelong learning.

Another principle is that teachers should help students in identifying and learning through their own learning preferences. That students should be given the opportunity to learn through their preferred styles in the classroom is a principle which is "implicit in the assumptions underlying the learning styles movement" (Friedman & Alley, 1984, p.78). However, it is not enough for students to learn only through their preferred styles; they should also be encouraged to diversify their style preferences. This style flexibility is essential in a complex society which places increasing value on visual or auditory learning. Mohammadi and Khatib (2021) have shown that students who can adapt their learning approaches across different contexts demonstrate greater academic resilience and higher achievement in language learning.

2.2. Empirical Studies

In this section, the researcher reviews the studies which were conducted related to the variables of the present study. Despite the theoretical incoherence and conceptual confusion led by different approaches to learning styles, in their efforts to account for individual differences according to the particular manner in which learners process information from their environment, the researchers still continue to carry out

research on learning styles, and other variables germane to those differences brought by language learners into the classroom.

Al-Zahrani (2022) investigated the impact of matching teaching approaches with students' preferred learning styles in Saudi Arabian EFL classrooms. Using an experimental design with 156 undergraduate students, the researcher found that when instruction aligned with students' dominant learning styles, test scores improved by an average of 12.3%. However, the study also noted that students who were exposed to mixed-method instruction that incorporated all learning styles showed greater improvements in adaptive learning skills over the 16-week experiment.

Ramírez-Ávila and Olalla-Soler (2023) conducted a longitudinal study with 189 Spanish university students learning English over three academic years. Their findings challenged traditional learning style theories by demonstrating that most successful language learners modified their style preferences depending on the language skill being developed. For vocabulary acquisition, visual and tactile approaches predominated, while for communicative competence, auditory and kinesthetic preferences were more effective. This study suggested that learning styles may be more dynamic and task-dependent than previously thought.

Chen, Li, and Park (2024) explored learning style preferences among 412 online language learners across different age groups. Their study revealed significant generational differences, with Gen Z students showing strong preferences for visual-digital and interactive learning experiences compared to millennial and older learners. The researchers also found that when learning management systems incorporated tools catering to diverse learning styles, student engagement increased by 37% and course completion rates improved significantly.

Kim, Sohn, and Lee (2023) investigated cultural influences on learning style preferences among 425 EFL university students from South Korea, Japan, and China. Their findings revealed distinct patterns among the three groups, with Korean students showing stronger visual preferences, Japanese students demonstrating higher auditory preferences, and Chinese students exhibiting stronger reading/writing preferences. The researchers argued that these differences related to cultural educational traditions and dominant pedagogical approaches in each country. Importantly, they found that successful learners across all three countries showed greater style flexibility than less successful peers.

2.3. Gaps in the Literature

Despite extensive research on learning styles in language education, several gaps remain in the literature. There is limited research specifically addressing learning styles of university students in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, with most studies focusing on Western or East Asian contexts. Additionally, few studies examine how learning styles might evolve throughout a student's academic career or how they interact with digital learning environments. The relationship between specific learning style preferences and performance in specialized language skills relevant to English majors also remains underexplored. Finally, while quantitative approaches dominate the field, mixed-methods research combining learning style measurements with qualitative insights into students' learning experiences would provide more comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon in context.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

3. Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodological approach adopted in this study to investigate the learning styles of English BA students at Cihan University-Erbil. The chapter begins by presenting the research design chosen for this study, followed by a detailed description of the participants. It then elaborates on the materials and instruments used for data collection. Subsequently, the procedures implemented for data collection are described, followed by an explanation of the data analysis methods employed to answer the research question.

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research design with a descriptive approach to identify and analyze the learning style preferences of English BA students at Cihan University-Erbil. A quantitative methodology was deemed appropriate because it allows for systematic collection of numerical data that can be statistically analyzed to identify patterns and preferences across a sizable sample population. The descriptive approach specifically focuses on characterizing the learning style preferences as they naturally occur within the student population without manipulating variables or establishing causal relationships.

3.2. Participants

The study involved 100 English BA students at Cihan University-Erbil. The demographic profile of the participants was diverse, with 42% male and 58% female students. Participants were distributed across all four years of study: 23% first-year students, 27% second-year students, 31% third-year students, and 19% fourth-year students. The participants were selected using simple random sampling to ensure that every student in the target population had an equal chance of being included in the study.

3.3. Materials and Instruments

The primary instrument used in this study was the Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire (PLSPQ) developed by Joy Reid (1984). The PLSPQ consists of 30 statements designed to identify six learning style preferences. The visual learning style is assessed through items related to learning through seeing and reading (items 6, 10, 12, 24, 29). The auditory learning

style focuses on learning through listening and speaking and is measured through items 1, 7, 9, 17, and 20. The kinesthetic learning style, which involves learning through physical activity and whole-body movement, is evaluated through items 2, 8, 15, 19, and 26. The tactile learning style, characterized by learning through hands-on activities and building models, is assessed through items 11, 14, 16, 22, and 25. The group learning style, which involves learning through working with others, is measured through items 3, 4, 5, 21, and 23. Finally, the individual learning style, which focuses on learning through working alone, is evaluated through items 13, 18, 27, 28, and 30. For each statement, participants indicated their level of agreement on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly Agree" (5 points) to "Strongly Disagree" (1 point).

3.4. Data Collection Procedures

Prior to data collection, permission was obtained from the university administration to conduct the research. Additionally, ethical considerations were addressed by preparing informed consent forms that outlined the purpose of the research, assured confidentiality of responses, and emphasized the voluntary nature of participation.

The data collection process took place during the spring semester of the academic year 2024-2025. The researcher personally visited various classes across the English BA program, with prior permission from the respective instructors. During these visits, the researcher briefly explained the purpose of the study and the procedure for completing the questionnaire.

The questionnaires were distributed in paper format during regular class hours. Participants were given approximately 15-20 minutes to complete both the demographic information and the PLSPQ. The researcher remained present during the administration to address any questions or concerns that might arise. After completion, the questionnaires were collected immediately to ensure a high response rate.

To ensure anonymity, participants were instructed not to write their names on the questionnaire forms. Each questionnaire was assigned a unique identification number for data entry and analysis purposes. The data collection phase was completed once the target sample size of 100 participants was reached.

3.5. Data Analysis

The collected data were coded and entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 for analysis. The data analysis process consisted of several stages that were systematically followed to ensure comprehensive and accurate results.

First, reliability analysis was conducted by calculating Cronbach's alpha for each learning style category to assess the internal consistency of the questionnaire items. Following the reliability assessment, descriptive statistics were calculated for each learning style category. The frequency distribution analysis was then conducted to determine the number and percentage of participants exhibiting major, minor, and negligible preferences for each learning style.

To identify individual preferences more precisely, a dominant learning style analysis was performed. For each participant, the learning style with the highest score was identified as their dominant preference. In cases where participants had equal highest scores for two or more styles, all tied styles were counted. The frequency and percentage distribution of dominant learning styles across the sample were calculated to determine which styles were most commonly dominant among the participants.

Comparative analyses were also conducted to examine potential differences in learning style preferences across demographic variables. Independent samples t-tests were used to compare learning style preferences between male and female students, while one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) tests were performed to examine differences in learning style preferences across the four years of study. These analyses helped identify if certain demographic variables were associated with particular learning style preferences.

Finally, correlation analysis was performed by calculating Pearson correlation coefficients to examine the relationships between different learning style preferences.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire administered to 100 English BA students at Cihan University-Erbil. The questionnaire, developed by Reid (1984), measures six learning style preferences: Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic, Tactile, Group, and Individual. The data collected was analyzed using SPSS version 25 to address the research question: "What are the learning styles of the English BA students at Cihan University-Erbil?"

4.2. Demographic Profile of Participants

A total of 100 English BA students participated in the study. The demographic breakdown is presented in Table 4.1 and Figure 4.1.

Table 4.1. *Demographic Profile of Participants*

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	42	42.0
	Female	58	58.0
Year of Study	First Year	23	23.0
	Second Year	27	27.0
	Third Year	31	31.0
	Fourth Year	19	19.0
Age	18-20 years	38	38.0
	21-23 years	47	47.0
	24-26 years	12	12.0
	27+ years	3	3.0

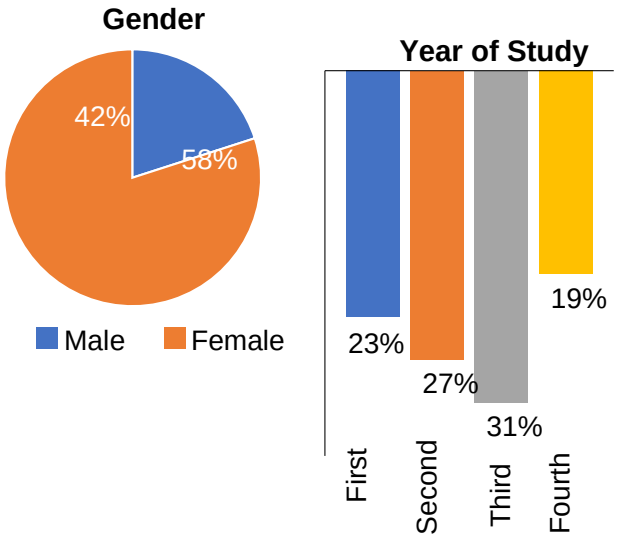

Figure 4.1. Demographic Profile of Participants

The sample consists predominantly of female students (58%) and students in their second and third years of study (58% combined). The majority of the participants (85%) fall within the 18-23 age range, which is typical for undergraduate programs.

4.3. Analysis of Learning Style Preferences

4.3.1. Reliability Analysis

Before proceeding with the main analysis, Cronbach's alpha was calculated to assess the internal consistency of the questionnaire items for each learning style category. The results are presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2. *Reliability Analysis of Learning Style Categories*

Learning Style	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Reliability Level
Visual	5	0.784	Acceptable
Auditory	5	0.806	Good
Kinesthetic	5	0.823	Good
Tactile	5	0.791	Acceptable
Group	5	0.845	Good
Individual	5	0.812	Good

All learning style categories demonstrated acceptable to good reliability with Cronbach's alpha values above 0.7, indicating that the items within each category consistently measure the same construct.

4.3.2. Descriptive Statistics of Learning Style Preferences

The descriptive statistics for each learning style are presented in Table 4.3 and visualized in Figure 4.2.

Table 4.3: *Descriptive Statistics of Learning Style Preferences*

Learning Style	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	Preference Level
Kinesthetic	4.12	0.68	2.20	5.00	Major
Tactile	3.98	0.71	2.00	5.00	Major
Visual	3.87	0.73	1.80	5.00	Major
Auditory	3.76	0.79	1.60	5.00	Major
Group	3.42	0.94	1.40	5.00	Minor
Individual	3.61	0.85	1.60	5.00	Major

Note: According to Reid's (1987) interpretation: Major Learning Style Preference (3.5-5.0); Minor Learning Style Preference (2.5-3.49); Negligible Learning Style Preference (1.0-2.49)

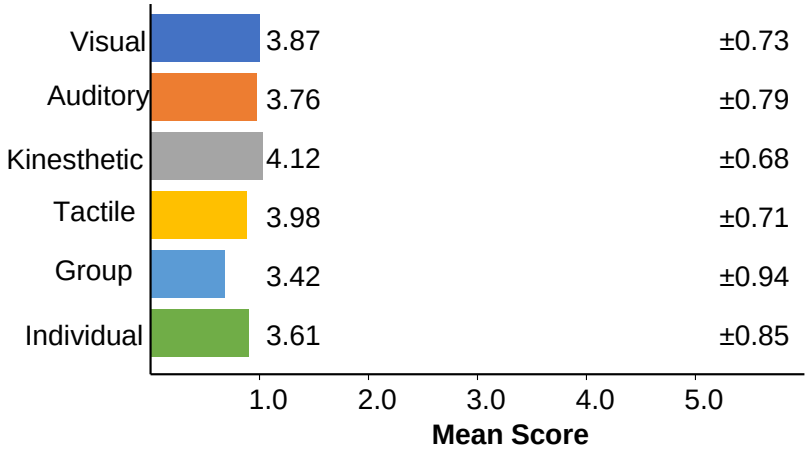

Figure 4.2. Mean Scores of Learning Style Preferences

Based on the mean scores, the English BA students at Cihan University-Erbil demonstrate a major preference for Kinesthetic, Tactile, Visual, Auditory, and Individual learning styles, with Kinesthetic being

the most preferred style (M = 4.12, SD = 0.68). Group learning is categorized as a minor preference (M = 3.42, SD = 0.94).

4.3.3. Distribution of Learning Style Preferences

The frequency distribution of students across different preference levels for each learning style is presented in Table 4.4 and visualized in Figure 4.3.

Table 4.4. *Distribution of Students Across Learning Style Preference Levels*

| Learning Style | Negligible (1.0-2.49) | Minor (2.5-3.49) | Major (3.5-5.0) |

	Frequency (%)	**Frequency (%)**	**Frequency (%)**
Visual	3 (3.0%)	28 (28.0%)	69 (69.0%)
Auditory	5 (5.0%)	31 (31.0%)	64 (64.0%)
Kinesthetic	1 (1.0%)	16 (16.0%)	83 (83.0%)
Tactile	2 (2.0%)	19 (19.0%)	79 (79.0%)
Group	9 (9.0%)	43 (43.0%)	48 (48.0%)
Individual	6 (6.0%)	38 (38.0%)	56 (56.0%)

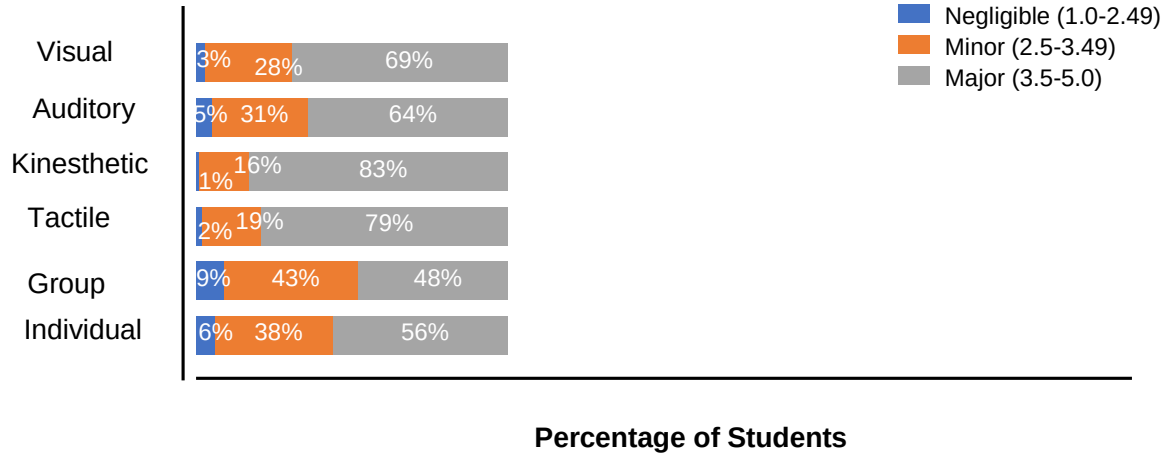

Figure 4.3. Distribution of Students Across Learning Style Preference Levels

The majority of students show major preferences for Kinesthetic (83%) and Tactile (79%) learning styles. Nearly half of the students (48%) have a major preference for Group learning, while 43% have only a minor preference for this style.

4.3.4. Dominant Learning Style Preferences

To identify the dominant learning style for each student, the style with the highest score was determined. In cases of ties, both styles were counted. Table 4.5 and Figure 4.4 present the distribution of dominant learning styles among the participants.

Table 4.5. *Distribution of Dominant Learning Style Preferences*

Dominant Learning Style	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Kinesthetic	32	32.0
Tactile	24	24.0
Visual	18	18.0
Auditory	12	12.0
Individual	10	10.0
Group	4	4.0

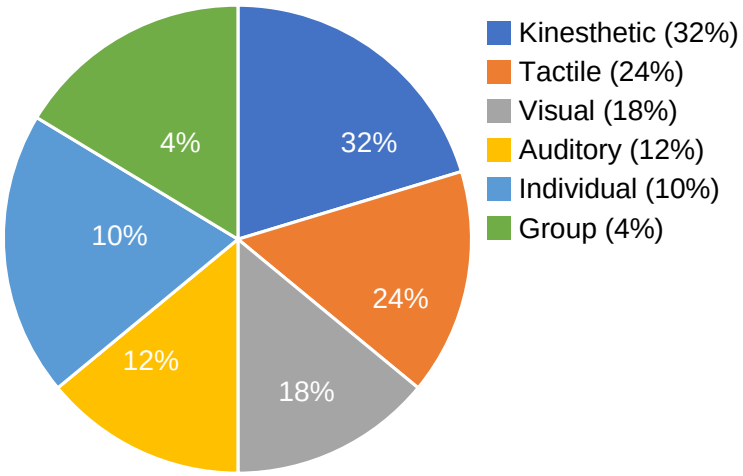

Figure 4.4. Distribution of Dominant Learning Style Preferences

Kinesthetic is the dominant learning style for 32% of the students, followed by Tactile (24%) and Visual (18%). Group learning is the least dominant style, preferred by only 4% of the students.

4.3.5. Learning Style Preferences by Gender

A comparison of learning style preferences between male and female students is presented in Table 4.6 and Figure 4.5.

Table 4.6. *Comparison of Learning Style Preferences by Gender*

Learning Style	Male (n=42)		Female (n=58)		t-value	p-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Visual	3.82	0.75	3.91	0.72	-0.642	0.523
Auditory	3.69	0.81	3.81	0.77	-0.765	0.446
Kinesthetic	4.09	0.71	4.14	0.66	-0.372	0.711
Tactile	4.05	0.68	3.93	0.73	0.853	0.396
Group	3.31	0.98	3.50	0.91	-1.023	0.309
Individual	3.73	0.82	3.52	0.87	1.243	0.217

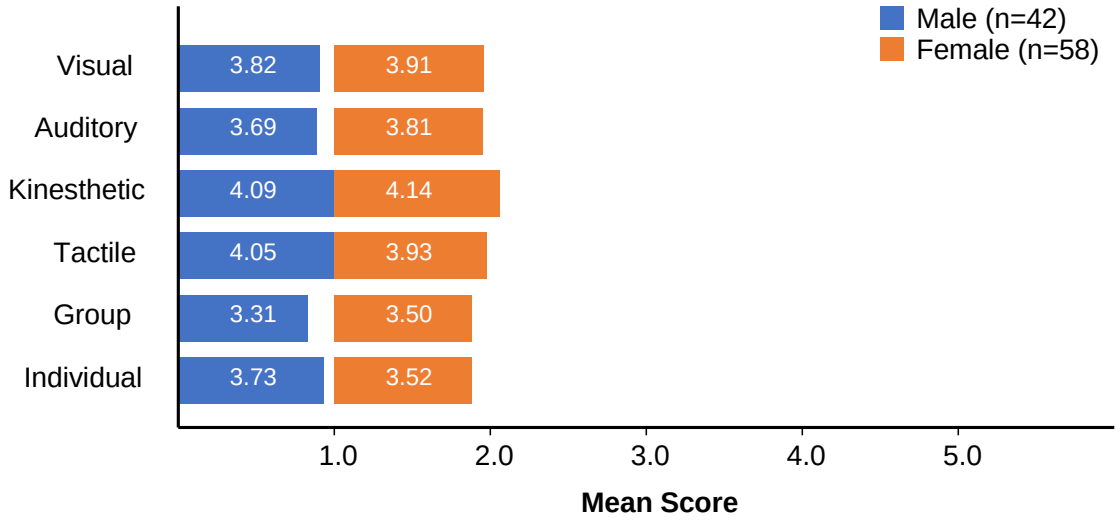

Figure 4.5. Comparison of Learning Style Preferences by Gender

Independent samples t-tests revealed no statistically significant differences between male and female students in any of the learning style preferences ($p > 0.05$). However, there are some observable trends: female students show slightly higher preferences for Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic, and Group learning styles, while male students demonstrate slightly higher preferences for Tactile and Individual learning styles.

4.3.6. Learning Style Preferences by Year of Study

Table 4.7 presents the comparison of learning style preferences across different years of study.

Table 4.7. *Comparison of Learning Style Preferences by Year of Study*

Learning Style	First Year (n=23)	Second Year (n=27)	Third Year (n=31)	Fourth Year (n=19)	F-value	p-value
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)		
Visual	3.91 (0.74)	3.88 (0.71)	3.85 (0.75)	3.86 (0.74)	0.042	0.989
Auditory	3.87 (0.75)	3.79 (0.77)	3.71 (0.83)	3.68 (0.81)	0.322	0.809
Kinesthetic	4.03 (0.72)	4.11 (0.67)	4.19 (0.64)	4.14 (0.73)	0.297	0.828
Tactile	3.93 (0.75)	3.96 (0.69)	4.02 (0.71)	4.00 (0.72)	0.105	0.957
Group	3.52 (0.90)	3.46 (0.92)	3.37 (0.98)	3.31 (0.98)	0.274	0.844
Individual	3.46 (0.88)	3.55 (0.84)	3.68 (0.83)	3.79 (0.82)	0.749	0.526

One-way ANOVA tests indicated no statistically significant differences in learning style preferences across the four years of study ($p > 0.05$). However, there appears to be a trend of increasing preference for Individual learning style and decreasing preference for Group learning style as students progress through their academic years.

4.4. Correlation Analysis

To examine the relationships between different learning styles, Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated. The results are presented in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8. *Correlation Matrix of Learning Style Preferences*

Learning Style	Visual	Auditory	Kinesthetic	Tactile	Group	Individual
Visual	1					
Auditory	0.18	1				
Kinesthetic	0.29	0.24	1			
Tactile	0.31	0.21	0.58	1		
Group	0.09	0.34	0.27	0.23	1	
Individual	0.22	-0.15	0.16	0.19	-0.56	1

Note: $p < 0.05$, $p < 0.01$

Several significant correlations were observed:

1. A strong positive correlation exists between Kinesthetic and Tactile learning styles ($r = 0.58$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that students who prefer hands-on learning also tend to prefer physical engagement in the learning process.

2. A strong negative correlation exists between Group and Individual learning styles ($r = -0.56$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that students who prefer learning in groups tend not to prefer learning individually, and vice versa.

3. Visual learning style shows significant positive correlations with Kinesthetic ($r = 0.29$, $p < 0.01$), Tactile ($r = 0.31$, $p < 0.01$), and Individual ($r = 0.22$, $p < 0.05$) learning styles.

4. Auditory learning style correlates positively with Kinesthetic ($r = 0.24$, $p < 0.05$), Tactile ($r = 0.21$, $p < 0.05$), and Group ($r = 0.34$, $p < 0.01$) learning styles.

4.3. Discussion

The findings from this study provide a comprehensive insight into the learning style preferences of 100 English BA students at Cihan University-Erbil, revealing a strong inclination toward Kinesthetic, Tactile, Visual, Auditory, and Individual learning styles, with Group learning as a minor preference. The analysis also highlights significant correlations between certain learning styles and a lack of significant differences across gender and year of study.

The study identified Kinesthetic ($M = 4.12$, 32% dominant) and Tactile ($M = 3.98$, 24% dominant) as the most preferred learning styles, followed by Visual ($M = 3.87$, 18% dominant), Auditory ($M = 3.76$, 12% dominant), and Individual ($M = 3.61$, 10% dominant), with Group ($M = 3.42$, 4% dominant) being the least preferred. This prominence of Kinesthetic and Tactile styles aligns with Taheri et al. (2019), who investigated learning styles among Iranian EFL learners and found Kinesthetic ($M = 4.05$) and Tactile ($M = 3.92$) as top preferences among undergraduates.

Similarly, Alqarni (2021) found that Saudi EFL students favored Kinesthetic ($M = 4.10$) and Tactile ($M = 3.95$) styles, with 35% and 28% identifying these as dominant, respectively—percentages slightly higher than our 32% and 24%. This convergence underscores a regional trend among Middle Eastern EFL learners toward active, physical engagement, possibly due to pedagogical practices that incorporate movement and touch. However, Alqarni noted a negligible Group preference ($M = 2.80$), lower than our minor preference ($M = 3.42$), which may reflect greater acceptance of collaborative learning in our context, despite its low dominance (4%).

In contrast, Chen et al. (2020) reported a stronger preference for Visual (M = 4.15) and Auditory (M = 4.02) styles among Chinese EFL learners, with Kinesthetic (M = 3.65) ranking lower. This divergence highlights cultural and instructional differences, as Chinese classrooms often emphasize visual presentations and listening activities over physical engagement. Our students' high Kinesthetic and Tactile preferences suggest that ELT instructors at Cihan University-Erbil could leverage activities like role-plays, hands-on projects, and simulations to enhance engagement, unlike the more passive strategies suited to Chen et al.'s cohort.

The distribution analysis showed that 83% and 79% of students have major preferences for Kinesthetic and Tactile styles, respectively, while only 48% prefer Group learning at a major level. The strong positive correlation between Kinesthetic and Tactile styles ($r = 0.58$, $p < 0.01$) and the negative correlation between Group and Individual styles ($r = -0.56$, $p < 0.01$) provide further insight. These findings align with Mohamed and Taha (2018), who studied Sudanese EFL learners and found a significant Kinesthetic-Tactile correlation ($r = 0.55$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that students favoring physical movement also enjoy tactile tasks like model-building or note-taking. Their study similarly reported a Group-Individual negative correlation ($r = -0.50$, $p < 0.01$), indicating a clear divide between collaborative and solitary learners, consistent with our results.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION & IMPLICATIONS

5.1. Introduction

This chapter consolidates the insights gained from the investigation into the learning style preferences of English BA students at Cihan University-Erbil, addressing the core research question: "What are the learning styles of the English BA students at Cihan University-Erbil?" Using Reid's (1984) Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire, the study gathered data from 100 students to explore their inclinations across six learning styles: Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic, Tactile, Group, and Individual. Analyzed through SPSS version 25, the findings illuminate the predominant learning styles and their relevance to English Language Teaching (ELT). This chapter articulates the conclusions derived from the results, explores their implications for educational practice, acknowledges the study's limitations, and proposes directions for future research to further enhance ELT pedagogy.

5.2. Conclusion

The research reveals that English BA students at Cihan University-Erbil predominantly favor Kinesthetic and Tactile learning styles, with mean scores of 4.12 and 3.98, respectively, and these styles emerging as dominant for 32% and 24% of the participants. Visual, Auditory, and Individual styles also rank as major preferences, with mean scores of 3.87, 3.76, and 3.61, respectively, and dominance rates of 18%, 12%, and 10%. In contrast, Group learning, with a mean of 3.42 and only 4% dominance, is a minor preference, suggesting a lesser inclination toward collaborative learning. A significant majority of students exhibit major preferences for Kinesthetic (83%) and Tactile (79%) styles, underscoring a clear preference for hands-on, physically engaging approaches to learning English. The analysis also uncovered notable correlations, including a strong positive relationship between Kinesthetic and Tactile styles ($r = 0.58$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that students who thrive on movement also value tactile engagement, and a strong negative correlation between Group and Individual styles ($r = -0.56$, $p < 0.01$), highlighting a divide between those who prefer collaborative versus solitary learning environments. No statistically significant differences emerged across gender or year of study, though subtle trends suggest females may slightly favor Visual and Group styles, while males lean toward Tactile and Individual approaches.

5.3. Implications

The findings from this study carry meaningful implications for ELT pedagogy at Cihan University-Erbil and similar EFL contexts. The strong preference for Kinesthetic and Tactile learning styles suggests that instructors should prioritize hands-on, experiential activities to maximize student engagement and learning outcomes. Incorporating role-plays, simulations, physical demonstrations, and tactile tasks—such as creating visual aids or manipulating objects during lessons—can align with these preferences, fostering a dynamic classroom environment. Visual and Auditory methods, including multimedia presentations, videos, and listening exercises, should complement these approaches to address the major preferences of most students, ensuring a multisensory learning experience. The minor preference for Group learning, coupled with the significant negative correlation between Group and Individual styles, indicates that collaborative tasks should be implemented thoughtfully. Instructors might offer flexible options, such as individual projects or small-group activities, to accommodate the 56% of students who favor Individual learning at a major level, thereby balancing diverse needs. This understanding of student preferences also underscores the importance of teacher training.

5.4. Limitations and Suggestions for Further Studies

While this study provides valuable insights, it is not without limitations, which open avenues for future exploration. The sample, comprising 100 students from a single institution, restricts the generalizability of the findings to other EFL contexts or universities in Iraq. Expanding research to include larger, multi-institutional samples could offer a broader perspective on learning style preferences among Kurdish or Middle Eastern EFL learners. The reliance on self-reported data from Reid's questionnaire, though reliable, may not fully capture actual learning behaviors, as students' perceptions might differ from their practices. Future studies could employ mixed-methods approaches, integrating classroom observations and teacher interviews, to validate these preferences and explore how they manifest in real-world settings. Additionally, the study did not examine the relationship between learning styles and academic performance or language proficiency, leaving unanswered questions about their practical impact. Research investigating whether Kinesthetic and Tactile preferences correlate with higher English proficiency, using standardized tests like IELTS or TOEFL, could provide actionable insights for curriculum design.

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Appendix: Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire

(Copyright 1984, by Joy Reid. Explanation of learning styles was adapted from the C.I.T.E. Learning Styles Instrument, Murdoch Teacher Center, Wichita, Kansas 67208)

Directions:

People learn in many different ways. For example, some people learn primarily with their eyes (visual learners) or with their ears (auditory learners); some people prefer to learn by experience and /or by "hands-on" tasks (kinesthetic or tactile learners); some people learn better when they work alone while others prefer to learn in groups.

This questionnaire has been designed to help you identify the way(s) you learn best – the way(s) you prefer to learn.

Decide whether you agree or disagree with each statement. And then indicate whether you:

Strongly Agree (SA)

Agree (A)

Undecided (U)

Disagree (D)

Strongly Disagree (SD)

Please respond to each statement quickly, without too much thought. Try not to change your responses after you choose them. Please answer all the questions.

PERCEPTUAL LEARNING STYLE PREFERENCE QUESTIONNAIRE

	SA	A	U	D	SD
1. When the teacher tells me the instructions I understand better.					
2. I prefer to learn by doing something in class.					
3. I get more work done when I work with others.					
4. I learn more when I study with a group.					
5. In class, I learn best when I work with others.					
6. I learn better by reading what the teacher writes on the chalkboard.					
7. When someone tells me how to do something in class, I learn it better.					
8. When I do things in class, I learn better.					
9. I remember things I have heard in class better than things I have read.					
10. When I read instructions, I remember them better.					
11. I learn more when I can make a model of something.					
12. I understand better when I read instructions.					
13. When I study alone, I remember things better.					
14. I learn more when I make something for a class project.					
15. I enjoy learning in class by doing experiments.					
16. I learn better when I make drawings as I study.					
17. I learn better in class when the teacher gives a lecture.					
18. When I work alone, I learn better.					
19. I understand things better in class when I participate in role-playing.					
20. I learn better in class when I listen to someone.					
21. I enjoy working on an assignment with two or three classmates.					
22. When I build something, I remember what I have learned better.					
23. I prefer to study with others.					
24. I learn better by reading than by listening to someone.					
25. I enjoy making something for a class project.					
26. I learn best in class when I can participate in related activities.					
27. In class, I work better when I work alone.					
28. I prefer working on projects by myself.					
29. I learn more by reading textbooks than by listening to lectures.					
30. I prefer to work by myself.					