Variation of Learning Styles among Iranian EFL Learners: Effects of Culture, Language Background and Gender

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Abstract

The overall aim of the present study was to investigate the learning style preferences of Iranian EFL learners majoring in English with two different cultural backgrounds. To do so, the web-based version of Felder and Solomon (1997) Index of Learning Style (ILS) was administered to evaluate the respondents’ preferences on four scales of the Index. The total sample of the subjects included 260 EFL learners, 160 Kurdish and 100 Persian native speakers, who studied English at Ilam University and Ilam Azad University, Ilam branch. Descriptive statistics analysis showed certain differences between learning style preferences of the subjects. Kurdish students appeared to have more preference for Sensing, Sequential, and Reflective dimensions, whereas Persian students had more preference for Active, Intuitive, Visual, Verbal, and Global dimensions. Yet, The results of the Chi-square statistics indicated that only the differences in the Sensing/Intuitive scale and Sequential/Global scale were significant at (p< 0.05) and (P< 0.01) respectively. The study also indicated that both groups represented different gender-bound variations in preference for the given dimensions. Female Kurdish students showed more preferences on all dimensions of the Index (Active, Reflective, Sensing, Intuitive, Visual, Verbal, and Sequential) except for the Visual and Global ones. On the contrary, in the Persian group male students represented stronger preferences on all dimensions (Active, Reflective, Sensing, Intuitive, Visual, Verbal, and Global) except for the Sequential one.