

The Problem of Language and Literature and the Question of the Privacy of Learning Styles: A New Look at an Old Subject

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Abstract

There has been some debate over the advocacy of either literature or language courses in turning out competent English language majors at Arab universities. This time, the issue is re-visited from a different perspective, i.e., as related to learning style preference. The interest in learning style shown by various academic disciplines including second language learning stems from the need to identify individual differences in terms of how learners perceive and process information. Style awareness on the part of classroom practitioners is believed to help them access the hard in order to teach.

The present paper handles the main query of what learning style/s is/are preferred by literature-favoring students in interacting with the world of experience as reflected in literature on the one hand and those opted for by language-inclined ones on the other. Besides, it further lends itself to the imperatives of the differing predilections, if any exist, displayed by learners in this specific scope of interest. The subjects' (English majors at Hashemite University) performance in the language courses over the four years of study was compared with that in the literature ones. The Learning Styles Construct developed by Kolb (1984) was used to classify the subjects into the four learning style preferences: Diverger, converger, assimilator and accommodator. Data were collected over a period of three years (1998-2001) to include the first three batches of English language graduates. While considering those of other directly or indirectly related studies, the findings of this study were utilized in arriving at implications constituting the basis of the need for a new outlook as related to syllabus choice or design, the role of the learner, that of the instructor and classroom practices.

Introduction

There has been some debate over the advocacy of either literature or language courses in turning out competent English language majors at Arab universities. This time, the issue is re-visited from a different perspective, i.e., as related to learning style preference. In this paper, the argument to be put forward will not address what to prioritize literature or language courses since the borderline between the two might not be looked at as a barrier within a well integrated program of language learning. A major part of the new outlook forwarded here is how to functionalize the content of both types of courses in a way that conforms to the style preferences of learners. The style preference of learning, when adequately considered, can be a significant variable in activating and revitalizing the role of the learner in language consciousness as part of the world of experience. Thus, it is the concern of this piece of work to draw the attention of literature or language/linguistics enthusiasts to this factor, which is thought to have received a back seat by many scholars in the overall assiduity of producing proficient users of English. Attention is to be paid to the actual classroom practices that have to utilize the content of the courses in meeting the learners' varied needs, address their individual differences in terms of potentials and expectations, and more significantly, in terms of their learning style preferences and learning strategies.

The issue, then, is reconsidering the ways and means of how to make the teacher-student interaction purposeful as based on informed policies derived from instructors' awareness of learners' differing strategies of learning. This is hopefully expected to make the clients i.e., students, convinced of what they are handling and thus enjoy the learning activities that exhibit alertness to the cognitive style preferences by providing much room for them. In an attempt to realize the forgoing objective, instructors have to look into what personal predisposition students display in terms of style and strategy of learning so that they can adequately address while handling the topics and themes of the courses, whether literature or language ones. Taking into consideration personal factors that are integral in the make-up of learners' characters has proven to be of significant asset in making the teaching-learning inputs meaningful and activating learners' perceived involvement and purposeful participation.

Moreover, teachers' recognition of the fact that learners have various needs should be reflected through tailoring and gearing literature and language courses to offer choices appropriately catering for these differing predilections and expectations. In this respect, Haggan, (1999: 22) argues that "we need not focus on whether linguistics or literature lead to better proficiency as there is room for both. We only need remember that our common aim is to provide a good, intellectually challenging language education for our students and recognize that what suits one individual may not suit another." It is quite expectable to encounter learners who find themselves better in literature or literary texts and, therefore, excel there, on the one hand, and those who prefer language/linguistics ones wherein they equally perform well on the other. One of the imperatives of these inevitable possibilities is to explore the learners' respective ways of perceiving and processing the world of experience as reflected in these different courses so that the hoped-for outcomes can be yielded.

Why Learning Style in an Educational Setup?

It is widely believed in education circles that awareness of learning styles on the part of instructors provides a better understanding of the individual differences that learners inevitably demonstrate. This, on its turn, would help develop a common language of teaching and learning in addition to improving the quality of student learning (Gibbs, Fielding, and FEDA, as cited in Lawrence, (1997:160). Fielding (see Lawrence, p. 160), for example, enthusiastically believes that an understanding of learning styles should be "a student entitlement and an institutional necessity." Many scholars have overtly voiced out complaint about the lack of studies and research on the utilization of learning styles in the classroom setup. For example, Lawrence (p. 160) further states that "application of knowledge about how people learn, the dynamics involved and how this might affect classroom learning has taken a back seat."

It is deemed vital that teachers try to come to terms with the difficulties in understanding the actual orientations of learners and the relevant, diverse pedagogical implications. The serious consideration of the learning style component as a decisive input might highly help teachers overcome the pedagogical drawback of striping language of its

relevance to those needs and interests. Failure to do this is viewed to be an unconscious silencing of diversity and, eventually, creativity.

Besides, Hayes and Allinson, (1997) who studied learning styles in work settings, emphasize that there is evidence from educational settings that learning cognitive style is an important learner characteristic that can influence learning achievement and the nature of a person's learning style can be influenced by his/her educational experience. They further add that there is also obvious evidence from work settings that some learning styles can be more adequate than others for the effective performance of particular work activities.

Statement, Purpose and Questions of the Study

Several articles have come out over the last two decades setting out cases for English instruction in departments of English at Arab universities either through literature or language/linguistics courses. Each of the concerned scholars (Haggan 1999; Obeidat 1997; Bader 1992; Zughoul 1987, 1986; John 1986; Salih 1986; and others) was upholding his/her respective commodity as a better effective means for turning out competent English majors. The blame for lack of language mastery was attributed to the predominance of either language/linguistics courses or literature ones. The future needs, for example, of the learners as related to the labor market were intuitively, and thus unconvincingly, sidestepped since they were viewed in light of either Chomsky's "fruitless linguistic trees", (Obeidat 1997: 30), or "the diction of T. S. Eliot or Shakespeare", (Haggan 1999: 22). No reasonable scholar can deny the significance of the contribution of both the size and quality of teaching materials to the aspired-to outcomes. Yet, to hold responsible either language or literature courses for the voiced out weakness of graduates is but one little facet of the teaching-learning formula. Adopting a comprehensive view of the whole process, other inputs into the process have to be equally prioritized. These include, among other things, the learners as a multi-faceted component comprising their individual differences, learning style preferences, and their expectations from a particular program or course etc. The instructors are another significant input in terms of their capabilities to fruitfully translate theory into appealing and convincing practices, the relevance of which to students' interests and their expected roles in future life can be felt; let alone the textbooks and other

information resources, methodology, and ways of evaluating learners' performance. Therefore, it may sound unscientific to attribute the dissatisfaction with the performance of English departments solely to the dominance of one discipline over another since both are indispensable if they are handled effectively within an integrated approach that addresses the sought long-term objectives.

Considering the forgoing argument, the present paper has come to voice out that other pressing current issues are to be handled by classroom practitioners rather than dwelling on the not much fruitful and heated debate over language courses or literature ones. Therefore, the main query being handled here is what learning style/s is/are preferred by literature-favoring students in interacting with the world of experience as reflected in literature on the one hand and those opted for by students finding themselves better in language/linguistics courses on the other. Of course, the distinction between a language program and that of linguistics is well perceived. The subjects' performance in the language courses over the four years of study was compared with that in the literature ones.

The learning style model developed by Kolb (1984) was used to classify the subjects into the four learning style preferences: diverger, converger, assimilator and accommodator. The Arabic translation of Kolb's model (see appendix 1) was used to ensure full perception of its content and eliciting appropriate responses on the part of the subjects. Data were collected over a period of three years (1998-2001) to include the first three batches of English language graduates from the Department of English at Hashemite University/Jordan. In addition to those of other related research, the findings of this study were utilized in arriving at suggested implications to meet the imperatives of displaying different learning styles by learners. This is thought of to be of much help in the move towards a new outlook based on consideration of syllabus choice or design, the role of the learner, that of the instructor and the informed classroom practices.

More specifically, the study limits itself to finding possible answers to the following main questions:

1. What learning styles do subjects who perform higher in language courses prefer?

2. What learning styles do students performing notably higher in literature courses favor?
3. What are the imperatives of showing different learning styles in this respect?

Method

Population

The population of this study is defined as comprising all fourth-year English majors at the Department of English/Hashemite University over the academic years 1998-2001. The number of subjects totals to (77) and thus, includes the first three batches of English graduates. The three groups of senior students were chosen because their performance in literature and language courses over the four years of study would hopefully give an overall picture of assessment in both strands and may reveal their general tendencies either towards literature or language.

Data Collection Procedure and Instruments

Due to awareness of the difficulty of developing one exam that can really reveal tendency towards either literature or language, the researcher thought that assessment of achievement through a large number of exams over the four years of study might give a more valid indication of the students' general inclination. Besides, adopting the University's official results of students' performance made it possible to include more than one batch of graduates. This increased the size of the population and heightened the degree of representation which, consequently, is expected to support the ensued argument. The diversity of evaluation, as the subjects sat for three exams in each course put by different instructors, is further thought of as a sign of strength since the belief is based on the assumption that a learner's overall predilection might be better uncovered through varied forms of measurement.

As mentioned above, the study was solely based on exam achievement in the two tracks of language and literature. Therefore, the researcher collected a sample of the final exams to see the general trend of evaluation in terms of the structure and nature of the tasks involved. It was noticed that the language tests were more varied, included more items and were mainly task-based. For example, tasks included sentence completion, guessing vocabulary from context, definitions, multiple-

choice items, cloze-tests, gap filling and transforming linear texts into non-linear and tabular ones where pieces of information are to be provided. Literature tests on the other hand, were less varied and primarily consisted of three to four questions, most of which were open-ended ones. Some definition-based items and compare-and-contrast ones were also among them. But generally, quite many items addressed a general phenomenon or trend, a personal trait as depicted in a dominating behavior of a particular character in a piece of work, and an overview or a summary of a specific theme (see appendix 3).

Kolb's model of the experiential learning style is a construct that comprises the two dimensions of perceiving and processing information. While the first portrays concrete and abstract thinking, the other delineates an active or reflective information-processing activity. Kolb's Learning Style Inventory (see appendix 2) is a self-reporting questionnaire consisting of nine items. The respondent has to rank four words whereby s/he demonstrates a special favoring in the specified modes of learning. Therefore, this nine-item self-report type of questionnaire has been designed to identify an individual's relative strengths in each of four learning styles: diverger, converger, assimilator and accommodator. Two scores are calculated reflecting stances along each of the learning style dimensions. For example, the first is the abstract conceptualization–concrete experience continuum (AC-CE). This reveals the extent to which the individual's style is abstraction or concreteness-based. The second continuum is the reflective observation–active experimentation one (RO-AE) whereby the individual's style appears to be either reflection or activity-oriented.

Moreover, the study adopted the subjects' grades in all language and literature courses over the four years of study where the score means were calculated for each subject in the two categories, language and literature. Then, students were classified into two categories according to their performance, viz., whether high or low. It is worth-mentioning here that Hashemite University uses the four-point scale in evaluation and the minimum accumulative average for a student to graduate is 2 out of 4. Thus, the range within which the subjects' performance was viewed either high or low, as is shown in Table 1 below, is a two-point one and thus the grades fluctuate between 2 and 4. Accordingly, in this study, the

scores ranging between 2.6 and above are considered high while below this (2 - 2.5) are low. The reason why the 2.6 score, (65 %), is chosen as the border line between a high score and a low one is that it is considered a (c+), i.e. a fair grade according to the scale (A, B+, B, C+, C, D+, D, E) used by the University.

Results and Discussion

As for the statistical procedure used in this study, the Chi-Square was adopted to reveal whether there were any significant differences among the subjects' preferences along the four styles of learning indicated above. As mentioned, it is the main focus of the study to classify the subjects in terms of whether they are diverger, converger, assimilator or accommodator learners and to find where each type would perform better, in language or literature. The findings of the analysis revealed the following: Out of the (77) students, (18) performed highly in both literature and language courses since their score means were 2.6 and above out of 4, while (12) of them scored lower. Yet, (23) of them performed highly in literature but lower in language, whereas (24) scored highly in language but lower in literature.

The first two categories of the subjects, i.e. those scoring either highly or low in both types of courses, were considered only in terms of their distribution along the learning style continuum since their performance in the two tracks is stable. Hence, practically, their performance as related to style- achievement interaction effect lies beyond the main concern of the study since it lends itself to exploring the differences, if any exists, between the learning style preferences of subjects who performed higher in language courses, on the one hand and those of students who scored better in literature ones, on the other.

The following table exhibits the numbers and percentages of the subjects as related to their performance in literature and language courses over their four years of study. Performance is revealed whether high or low in the two tracks of language and literature according to the criterion mentioned above.

Table 1: Numbers and percentages of subjects according to performance

Performance	Number	Percentage
High Lit. & Lang.	18	23.37 %
Low Lit & Lang.	12	15.58 %
High Lang. & Low Lit.	24	31.16 %
High Lit. & Low Lang.	23	29.87 %
Total	77	100 %

The previous table demonstrates the students' achievement over the four years of study, which clearly indicates that some scored highly in literature and language (23.37%) while others (15.58%) performed low. Yet, one group (31%) scored highly in language but low in literature, on the one hand, and another (30%) low in language but highly in literature, on the other hand. This is quite expected in any class where some learners either excel or show low performance in all areas since these can be learners of either high or low aptitude and abilities. Others, however, perform well only in certain tasks or activities depending on how much these appeal to their preferred learning style.

Although cognitive and learning styles are typically defined as consistent individual differences in preferred ways of organizing and processing information, several writers such as Messick et al., Kogan, Wilson, and Kirton, (all cited in Hayes and Allinson, 1997: 187), pointed out the distinction between "cognitive style as a high-level heuristic that produces consistent behavior across a wide variety of situations and learning strategies or coping behaviors that reflect the individual's response to the requirements of a particular situation." This has also been supported by many studies suggesting that high aptitude learners and those with particular cognitive styles perform well regardless of the instructional strategies and classroom practices they are exposed to. Likewise, this might be applied to those learners who are passive, possess low potentials and thus continue to be low achievers since they lack this skill of adapting their learning strategies to cope with the imperatives of an emerging learning situation. Nevertheless, some evidence has been

provided as to the interaction effect between an individual's learning style and other variables involved in the leaning process.

In addition, Messick (cited in Hayes and Allinson, 1997:187), claims that it is likely for an individual to utilize a variety of specialized problem-solving and learning strategies that are consistent with their cognitive style and it is also possible to learn to switch to less congenial strategies that may be more effective for a particular task. In light of what has been mentioned, the fact that some learners performed equally well in both language and literature courses and showed no significant differences could be rationalized. This kind of learner adaptability has been supported with evidence by the work of Doktor and Bloom, Doktor, and Rush and Moore who conducted a study that explored the feasibility of enhancing learner adaptability through training, (cited in Hayes and Allinson, 1997: 188). Yet, individuals with a reflector, another label for converger, learning style, are reported to prefer work and activities which involve data gathering and analysis whereas learners with a pragmatist (accommodator) learning style preference are mainly after the direct application of their learning in assisting plan practical solutions to their problems (Lawrence, 1997).

Considering the fact that the style-ability factor can never be avoided in the process of learning, the style preferences of the two extremes were identified and explained accordingly as demonstrated in Table 2 and the ensuing argument.

Table 2: Distribution of subjects scoring either highly or low in both types of courses along the four styles of learning

Performance Diverg. Converg. Assimil. Accom. Number

High Lit. & Lang.	3	4	5	6	18	23.37 %
Low Lit & Lang.	4	3	2	3	12	15.58 %
Total	7	7	7	9	30	38.65 %

The difference in achievement among the four types of learners in general in addition to the significant variance between convergers and accommodators in particular, as will be shown later, has to be addressed in light of the style-ability distinction. It is doubtless that both style and ability will affect performance on a given task. What makes them basically distinctive, however, is that performance on all tasks will improve as ability increases, whereas the effect of style on performance for an individual will either be positive or negative depending on the nature of the task. What follows from this is that for an individual at one end of a style dimension, a task of a type s/he finds difficult will be found easier by someone at the other end of the dimension, and vice versa. For example, if the dimension is the wholist-analytic style, then wholist learners will find tasks that require processing information in parts more difficult than analytic learners, but they will find tasks built on processing information in wholes easier than the latter. In other words, in terms of style an individual can be both good and poor at tasks depending on the nature of the task, while for ability or intelligence, learners are either good or poor (see Riding, 1997). The fact that one group of the subjects showed high achievement in both areas while another exhibited low one, and show no significant differences according to style preference, as is clear in Table 2 above, is bound to be explained in light of the assumption that they are either good or poor learners in terms of ability or intelligence.

However, the study's major concern is with the majority of the subjects (61%), those who either scored higher in one or lower in the other and vice versa in order to identify their general tendency in terms of learning style and trace the style-achievement interaction effect. The following table displays the distribution of the students who scored higher in language courses but lower in literature ones.

Table 3: Distribution of subjects scoring highly in language but low in literature along the four styles of learning

Learning style	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Diverger	4	6.0	-2.0
Converger	13	6.0	7.0*
Assimilator	4	6.0	-2.0
Accommodator	3	6.0	-3.0
Total	24		

Test Statistics

	MODEL
Chi-Square	* 11.000
Df	3
Asymp. Sig.	.012

0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 6.0.

Table three shows that twenty-four, scored highly in language but low in literature, thirteen of whom preferred the converger style of learning. This percentage, (54.16%), has proven to be of high indication since the value of the Chi-Square (11.000) is statistically significant at alpha = 0.05 level, while 46% were distributed along the other three types of style preference. As can be seen from the previous table, the analysis provides information that suggests an answer to the first question addressing the extent to which styles of learning affect achievement in language courses. According to the learning style model used here, converger learners, unlike assimilators and accommodators who are active and thus impulsive, prefer the reflective style of dealing with information. This type of learners are referred to as field-independent who heavily rely on

analysis, pay attention to details and usually show good mastery of drills and exercises, and other focused activities (Brown, 1994: 106). This was also confirmed by Doron, Hansen, Alptekin and Atakan, Chapelle and Abraham, Chapelle and Green (cited in Brown, 1994: 107) and Al-Quran (2001) who all provided evidence for highly positive correlation between field-independence style and language success in the classroom. In addition, they all referred to the superiority that field-independent learners, who are characterized as reflectors and analytic, maintain in second language achievement. Hence, it seems that reflective interaction with the information offered by instructors and other sources of learning or that embodied in test items significantly impacts performance in language courses.

Considering the nature of the sample of the language tests and the structure of the tasks involved, no wonder that convergers scored higher since they include, as mentioned earlier, cloze-tests, gap filling, multiple choice items, guessing meanings from context, matching items, etc. Such forms of language evaluation are considered an appropriate environment for analysis based on processing information into its component parts, a style much favored by convergers or reflectors, to use Honey and Mumford's (1992) label. Regardless of whether this is an advantage or disadvantage, traditional language tests might provide much fewer tasks that entail manifesting "a global view of a topic" (Sadler-Smith, 1997:54) which in contrast, wholists or accommodators tend to retain. In this regard, Schmeck (cited in Sadler-Smith, p. 55) concluded that "people with an extreme analytical style have focused attention, noticing and remembering details. They have an interest in operations and procedures and proper ways of doing things and prefer step-by-step, sequential organizational schemes ... They are gifted at critical and logical thinking."

In regard to the second main query of the study addressing the most preferable learning style/s by literature-favoring students, 52.17% of those whose scores were high in literature and low in language turned out to be accommodators, while 48% were distributed along the other three styles. The following table shows the distribution of students who scored highly in literature but low in language along the four styles of learning.

Table 4: Distribution of subjects scoring highly in literature but low in language along the four styles of learning

Learning style	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Diverger	3	5.8	-2.8
Converger	5	5.8	-8
Assimilator	3	5.8	-2.8
Accommodator	12	5.8	6.3*
Total	23		

Test Statistics

	MODEL
Chi-Square	* 9.522
Df	3
Asymp. Sig.	.023

- 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 5.8.

As is shown in Table 4, twenty-three students out of seventy-seven scored highly in literature but low in language courses. Twelve of this group, (52.17%), turned out to be accommodators. This percentage is considered highly indicative since the value of the Chi-Square was found to be (9.522), which is statistically significant at alpha = 0.05 level. Thus, according to the results, students who performed better in literature courses seemed to prefer the accommodator style of learning.

Accommodators or pragmatists, as called by Honey and Mumford (1992), who did better in literature courses, being an answer to the second question the study raises, are described to be wholistic not paying attention to specific details which traditional language achievement tests emphasize. Unlike divergers and convergers, accommodators and assimilators are extroverts focusing on communication and show no obsession with accuracy of forms but focus on the general message or theme under discussion. Assuming that literature instructors are mainly after the learner's overall way of approaching a particular theme and not paying much attention to little linguistic inaccuracies that do not block communication, accommodators' better performance in literature assessment might be explained. Moreover in this respect, Schmeck (cited by Sadler-Smith, 1997: 55), further adds that people with a "global [i.e. wholist] style have an attention toward scanning, leading to information of global impressions rather than more precisely articulated codes ... Their thinking is more intuitive than that of an analytic person ... They are likely to be more impulsive ... and are more gifted at seeing similarities than differences."

Affectively, accommodators, as field-dependent individuals are inclined to be more socialized and "tend to derive their self-identity from persons around them, and are usually more empathic and perceptive of the feelings and thoughts of others" (Brown 1994:106). Holding the view that the foreign culture depicted in the literature they are studying is a key component of the 'field' in which they are functioning, and thus are highly willing to immerse in this cultural milieu may provide further support for explaining their excellence in literature. Conversely, the dominant nature of most of the language courses, or at least the way they are either carried out or presented in assessment tests may not provide equal opportunities of cultural immersion. The consequent assimilation of the embedded foreign culture norms and patterns of behavior is eventually expected to be reflected in one's language and test performance and thus positively affects how his/her communicative competence is assessed. Therefore, the more prolonged contact with the second language culture made available by literature and which meets the need or drive to get integrated into the speech community of the foreign language can be perceived as advantageous in this context.

Moreover, Lawrence (1997) further reports that according to Honey and Mumford's (1992) learning style model, individuals preferring the activist (diverger) style gain from action-based learning, which is immediately experienced. People with a reflector (converger) learning style preference show tendency for work that involves data gathering and analysis. Those opting for the theorist (assimilator) style focus on analyzing and synthesizing information, while individuals with a pragmatist (accommodator) learning style need to see the direct application of their learning in helping plan practical solutions to their problems.

It is known that convergers, who performed higher in language courses in this study, are analytic, whereas accommodators, achieving better in literature, are wholists. Taking into consideration the nature of the language exams referred to above, it is worth-noting that such types of tasks generally require processing information in parts, a style favored by analytic learners, which might be an answer to why convergers scored higher in language courses. The literature tests on the other hand, reflected a different nature since, as mentioned earlier, included open-ended questions addressing a general phenomenon or trend, a personal trait of a particular character in a piece of work, an overview or a summary of a specific theme. Excelling in these areas is explained here, regardless of how much valid it is, in terms of the advantage of possessing a facility to obtain a whole view on the part of the wholists, who are further labeled as accommodators. Such tasks are believed to provide more room for this type of learners to exercise their preferred skill of processing information in wholes and thus analyze the information into its structure accordingly.

The variance in achievement among the four types of learners could be attributed to the way in which the content of the tests, information offered by instructors or the other varied sources were perceived and processed. What is worth-noting here is that convergers, who scored highly in language but low in literature and accommodators who, scored highly in literature but low in language have nothing in common in either the way they perceive information or that in which they process it. For example, while accommodators prefer concrete experiencing and thus take in information concretely, convergers opt for abstract

conceptualization on the one hand, and the former interact with information actively but the latter process it reflectively. Thus, accommodators who excelled in literature differ completely in learning style preference in terms of both processing and interacting with the world of experience from convergers who did better in language courses.

Having found out that learners who did better in language courses preferred different learning styles from those opted for by their counterparts in literature ones can provide a solid ground for the claim that the factor of learning style is a shared concern for both language and literature instructors. This could also provide a basis for considering the imperatives of different learning styles, the third question of the study, exhibited by different types of learners while dealing with the content of a language program presented in different modes whether in written material, verbally by instructors or that given in exams, etc. This observation pertaining to learning style preference as a shared concern between language and literature instructors to promote learners' linguistic competence has to be invested to meet the need for a new outlook. Since the move in recent years has been toward a more learner-centered approach, the various cognitive and socio-affective strategies employed by different learners can be of paramount importance for language teachers. Ability to identify and invest in such styles and strategies by instructors is believed to provide more opportunities for purposeful practice and use of the language inside and outside the classroom.

Furthermore, in a study addressing the range of individual differences in terms of cognitive styles, learning styles, and approaches of studying, Sadler-Smith (1997) found that pragmatists (accommodators) prefer significantly the deep approach and were reported to enjoy very high academic self-confidence while activists (divergers) opt for the strategic approach. Sadler-Smith (p. 54) found that "Subjects with a deep approach report that they try to work out the meaning of information for themselves, do not accept ideas without critical examination, relate ideas from their studies to a wider context and look for reasoning, justification and logic behind ideas." As for the academic self-confidence, subjects tended to perceive themselves as able, intelligent and capable to cope with the intellectual and academic demands of their studies. However, activists in the same study, who showed significant preference for the

strategic approach, demonstrated perception of having clear goals related to their studies and being hard workers and ensured that they had the appropriate resources and conditions for successful study and felt that they were generally well organized. What is of more relevance in this respect is that the deep approach and high self-confidence which pragmatists (accommodators) displayed on the one hand, and the strategic approach adopted by activists (divergers) on the other, significantly correlated with academic performance.

The findings arrived at in this study that accommodators excelled in literature while convergers did better in language courses could provide instructors of English language and literature with very useful chances to invest in these characteristics students show. Accordingly, instructors can provide tasks that account for the various approaches of study, viz., deep approach, surface approach, strategic approach, and academic self-confidence, to use the ones adopted by Sadler-Smith. A literature instructor, for example, can wisely invest the innate potentials of different types of learners such as the ability to assimilate foreign culture ways of thinking and life style enjoyed by assimilators. In addition, special focus could be given to utilizing pragmatist/accommodator learners' holistic view and ability of handling and assessing an overall situation or different life scenarios. This can be skillfully done in a language or literature class. Of course, this doesn't entail that a literature session can't provide room for divergers and convergers, to use Kolb's labels or activists and reflectors, to use Honey and Mumford's terms, wherein their analytic potentials can be furthered and thus gain a better understanding of both the foreign language and culture.

Conclusion

It is worth considering that learning style as a potent learner that can have a significant effect on learning achievement is an integral component of the classroom learning context. Hence, no successful language learning can be carried out if instructors lack awareness of the contribution of such factors in the intricate makeup of the whole process. Not only is language hardly ever learned or taught in abstraction from its social and cultural contexts but also from its psychological one. Bearing in mind the inevitable likelihood of meeting all types of learners, instructors are to consider effective means of utilizing the content of

either a language or literature class to produce an analyst or wholist language competent whose potentials of critical thinking or problem-solving can be further cultivated. Awareness of these priorities is sure expected to help educators as guiding principles for syllabus choice and design, which consequently may better inform various language skills instruction. It is in this way that we guarantee the utilization of applying learning style research to improve the multi-faceted language learning process.

Adopting a more liberal view of literature and language courses in teaching language to serve the individuals' needs and preferences, the question of what we are mainly after should not only be raised but also remodeled. It is how we meet the target group expectations through pedagogical practices based on informed decisions addressing varied choices favored by student differing learning styles. Addressing personal preferences might easily lead to the realization of pedagogical democracy and the effect it can have not only on bringing about learning in general, but also on furthering language learning in particular. This question is, unfortunately, infrequently raised and, when it is discussed, it is rarely taken far enough to consider actual classroom practices that lead to fruitful learning.

Finally, in spite of the differences found between convergers and accommodators concerning their achievement, the researcher is aware of the limitations that the study has since the conclusions might be more sound and the ensued judgements probably more valid if other variables were considered such as the way the instructional material is structured, its mode of presentation, its type of content and an actual observation of the instructors' classroom practices. Thus, ignoring the uncovered input that these factors could have, which have not been accounted for by the study since its scope is limited, into the arrived-at findings would be very unreasonable.

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Appendix 1

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(3)

(4)

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Appendix 2

Kolb's Learning Style Inventory

This survey is designed to explore the way you prefer to learn. There are nine sets of statements -one set in each row. Look at the statements and decide how they refer to you. Give 4 marks for the statement most important to you, 3 marks for the second, 2 for the third and 1 mark for least important to you. There are no right or wrong answers.

	CE	RO	AC	AE
1.	I like to get involved.	I like to take my time before acting.	I am particular about what I like.	I like things to be useful
2.	I am open to new experiences.	I like to look at all sides of issues.	I like to analyze things and break them down into their parts.	I like to try things out
3.	I like to follow my feelings.	I like to watch.	I like to think about things	I like to be doing things
4.	I accept people and situations the way they are.	I like to be aware of what's around me.	I like to evaluate.	I like to take risks
5.	I have gut feelings and hunches.	I have a lot of questions.	I am logical.	I am hard working and get things done
6.	I like concrete things, things I can see, feel, or smell.	I like to observe.	I like ideas and theories	I like to be active
7.	I prefer learning in here and now.	I like to consider things and reflect about them.	I tend to think about the future.	I like to see results from my work
8.	I rely on my feelings.	I rely on my own observations.	I rely on my own ideas.	I have to try things out for myself
9.	I am energetic and enthusiastic.	I am quiet and reserved.	I tend to reason things out	I am responsible about things

Appendix 3

Sample Tests

Hashemite University
Department of English

Syntax 1

Final Exam

I. Unscramble these sentences: (8 pts.)

1. wonderful /raised /point /what /a / you've /!

2. interested/ the/ in/ which/ group /topic /is?

3. were/ hotter /here / I /somewhere/ wish / I / than

4. he/ the/ stand/ take/ we/ witness/ demand/ that

II. Change the following sentences into passive voice. (5 pts.)

1. She has skipped 15% of the meetings and the committee will not let her continue.

2. Ali almost ran over me.

3. Where can we place it?

4. No body expects her to excel.

5. The nasty gash needed medical attention.

III. Ask questions about the underlined words. (6 pts.)

1. The boss thinks Arwa was responsible for the delay.

 2. Her poverty made Ali change his mind.

3. The lab technician performed the task competently.

4. The discussion ended up with a perfect solution.

5. They considered the reduction of violence to children.

6-I couldn't see the doctor; he was busy all day.

IV. Write sentences that have: (16 pts.)

1. a preposition followed by a complement as -ing clause.

2. a preposition followed by a complement as nominal relative clause.

3. a modifier of an adjective.

4. an adverb as an intensifier.

5. an adjective + post-modifier.

6. a pre-modifier + adjective + post-modifier.

7. an adjective as a post-modifier.

8. an intransitive phrasal verb.

9. a transitive phrasal verb.

10. a prepositional verb + a prepositional object.

11. a non-finite verb phrase(-ing).

12. a non-finite verb phrase (-ed).

13. a subject-related complement.

14. an object-related complement.

15. an adverbial complement.

16. an appositive noun phrase.

V. Read the following sentence then answer the questions. (6 pts.)

“*The snowstorm paralyzed the country.*”

Write a new sentence using snowstorm as a direct object.

Write a new sentence using the country as a subject.

Write a new sentence using snowstorm as a complement.

VI. Write the semantic function/meaning of the following underlined sentence element

elements. (5 pts.)

1. Dr. Adnan is my new partner. ()
2. The interior design is superb. ()
3. The baby fell off the couch. ()
4. They are having a celebration this evening. ()

5. I have shown Ali the whole scenario. ()

VII. Discuss means of expressing future time and give examples. (4 pts.)

1. -----

Example: -----

2. -----

Example: -----

3. -----

Example: -----

4. -----

Example: -----

Hashemite University

Department of English

Introduction to the Novel

Final Exam

Answer the following questions:

1. Write a short note on Fielding's contribution to the development of the English novel.
2. Which do you consider the most humorous incident in Joseph Andrews?
3. Explain how you feel Hardy has tried to establish a particular sense of place in The Return of the Native, and suggest how successfully you think he has achieved this effect.
4. Write a short essay on The Return of the Native as a novel projecting a tragic vision.
5. Discuss Virginia Woolf's contribution to the modernity of the English novel.
6. Comment on the following quotation:
Strife, divisions, difference of opinion,
prejudices twisted into the very fibre of being,
oh that they should begin so early, Mrs. Ramsy
deplored. They were so critical, her children.
They talked such nonsense. She went from the

dining-room, holding James by the hand, since he would not go with the others. It seemed to her such nonsense inventing differences, when people, heaven knows, were different enough without that. The real differences, she thought, standing by the drawing-room window, are enough, quite enough (1,1).

Hashemite University

Department of English

Poetry (2120325)

Final Exam/ 2000

Answer question one and any two of the others.

Q1: Write a biographical account of three of the following poets. Then, relate their biography to their poetry, naming and discussing the principal aspects of their poems and how their biographies influenced them.

Sir Walter Raleigh

Sir Philip Sidney

Sir Thomas Wyatt

Alexander Pope (20 points)

Q 2: a) What are the principal contributions of early Tudor poetry?

b) How did they influence Elizabethan poetry? (15 points)

Q 3: a) What are the principal characteristics of Augustan poetry?

b) Why did the Augustan movement take place? (15 points)

Q 4: Apply the Augustan characteristics to one of the following: (15 pts)

a) Dryden's "A Song for St. Cecilia's Day, 1689.

b) Pope's "Essay on Criticism".

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