# PEDAGOGIC PRACTICES AND LEARNER'S PREFERENCES IN SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

## Dr. T Beena

*Asst. Prof., Amity Institute of Behavioural and Allied Sciences,*
*Amity University, Noida, Uttar Pradesh*

**Abstract:** Globalisation triggered massive changes in the field of Education in the global scenario making inroads into the field of teacher education as well. The changes have initiated sweeping transformations in the area of English language education which had evolved itself over a period of time. The fact of not having enough research data in the area of English language teaching was also glaringly visible at this point. The effect of having a robust Teacher education structure and system and its impact on the growth and development of the country is well understood. As a result focus on revamping teacher education system has attained prominence. Sensitive and skilled educators are the need of the hour. The requirement of the time seemed that new strategies and teaching methods be incorporated into the teaching – learning process at the dissemination stage. This paper provides insights into the learning preferences of the learners and perspectives to enable integrate different methods, principles and materials in English language education. Research helped identify the predominant Learning styles of students of English, learning English as a Second language.  The study highlights the linkage between teachers' pedagogic practices, learning styles of the learners; context sensitivity and the need for producing balanced learners. It also makes a modest attempt to suggest teaching methodologies to enhance the effectiveness of the teaching learning transactions.

**Keywords:** Pedagogic Practices, Learning Preferences, Skilled Educators.

**Introduction:** Language being a skill subject, acquisition of language skills is through practice. A child gets exposure to the mother tongue from a very early stage from family and the environment as a result of social interaction. The horizon of exposure becomes wider as the child grows and mingles with the society. The acquisition of mother tongue is natural, effortless, spontaneous and in real life situations. The association of word and meaning is established in natural contexts.  The second language unlike the mother tongue has to be learnt or acquired in formal situations. Favourable attitude and positive motivation facilitate learning. Language being a behavioural science is not acquired by mere intellectual activities of the learners. Careful planning, preparation and execution of lessons are very important. Effective communication in Target Language is possible only if the language teachers become skilled educators who would provide the learners with the much needed tools that would help them to communicate fluently, accurately and appropriately. Topics, functions and situations need to be set to attain the basic goals of communication. The language teacher need to be sensitive in providing situation and topics that best fits into the purpose of communication and connecting it to the real world.  It is also imperative to provide learners with language ladders which help them to understand and imbibe the tools needed to articulate the functions of language in countless situations and contexts. Language ladders help the teachers to provide the learners with support and structure that help the learners to master language successfully. New concepts can be introduced, previously learned materials can be reviewed and the classroom commands and expressions can all be supported with the help of language ladders.

**Identified Learning Preferences:** The research conducted on school students revealed that in a classroom every child has a preferential way of absorbing, processing, comprehending and retaining the information. In other words, every student learns differently as they have different learning styles. Some learn better with verbal instructions, or written instructions while others might prefer practical experience. Students learning preferences depend on one's prior experience, environmental,  cognitive and emotional factors as well as. The learning modes  preferred by the students showed significant
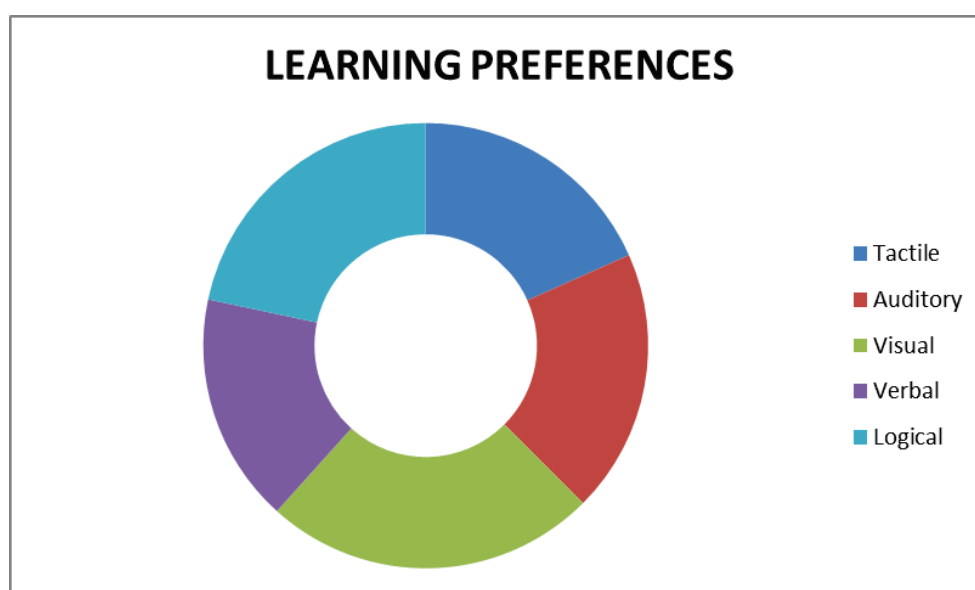
influence in their knowledge acquisition and behavior. As a result the preferred learning modes need to be taken into account while developing teaching learning strategies. From pedagogical point of view an individual's habitual pattern of processing and acquiring information is a central goal of every level of educational system.

The considerable individual differences in language learning such as motivation, aptitude, attitude, gender, age, social status, culture, etc. are factors that work well with one and may not work the same with for another. As a result none of the strategies, methods, techniques can work in all classes, with all students at all the time. Having focused enough on the various methodologies of teaching language, it has become imperative to choose alternative strategies to language teaching which would bring about an effective transaction of the subject. The shift of focus at this juncture to the language learner and the associated variables that affect language learning is more than welcome and is the need of the hour.

Students' preferred style of learning seeking, absorbing, analysing, grasping and retaining information range from verbal instructions and written instructions to experience based practical learning and so on. These varied preferences are a challenge to the teachers as to what strategy is to be adopted to drive home the subject the teacher desires to teach. The learning style preferences of students depend on the experience of the learners and emotional and cognitive factors. A learner has his own characteristic patterns of strength, weaknesses and preferences in taking in and retrieving information. A skilled educator explores the learning preferences of the learners in order to better understand the strategies and approaches that could be employed to transact the content effectively. The role played by the language teacher in fostering effective and fruitful participation in the teaching learning process is crucial to the development of the language. The interest generated by the modes adopted for the dissemination of knowledge is crucial to the transfer of knowledge and retention in the mind of the students. The retention becomes possible if the strategies used are in tune with the learning style of the learners. The role played by the language teacher in fostering effective and fruitful participation in the teaching learning process is crucial to the development of the language.

The dominant learning preferences identified by the researcher after administering a questionnaire to the students and a checklist to the teachers are visual, auditory, tactile, verbal and logical. The traits exhibited by the learners for the above said preferences were documented.

Pictorial representation of Learning Preferences of the sample indicating high preference for Visual and Logical is indicated below.



**Figure 3:** Identified Learning Preferences

In the case of **Tactile** learners they enjoyed hands-on-training, application of knowledge to real life situations, experimenting new things, walking through their experiences solving issues, speaking with hands and gestures, with difficulty in remaining still and learning as they experience. The strategies that the teacher can adopt to motivate and instil learning may be in the form of giving project based learning, acting out stories, using flash cards, role playing, dramas, associating with life examples  and using pictures and visual aids to drive home the topic taught.

The predominant trait observed in an **Auditory** learner was the power to grasp the information by hearing and listening. These learners exhibited easier time understanding the spoken instructions than the written ones.  Expressing ideas orally, reading aloud, taking to self and others etc., were clearly observed in these auditory learners. As part of the pedagogical analysis the strategies that the teacher can adopt are throw open a discussion, debate, lectures, use flash cards to teach new words by reading, reading stories and giving opportunities for the learner to audio recordings, tapes etc.

A **Visual** learner had difficulty with vocal directions and was easily distracted by sounds. They were attracted to spoken language and visual presentations for the information to be learnt. They preferred to learn from what is seen or observed like diagrams, images, videos, charts etc., by visualising through what they see. They associated the ideas data and concepts through images and symbols and highlighted or coloured fonts.  The strategies the teacher can adopt to transact new knowledge are using concept map, pictures, diagrams, flashcards, and other methods that are primarily visual and engage in highlighting and colouring.

**Linguistic or Verbal** learners were found to be skillful at using words both in speech and writing. They were found enjoy reading, writing and make constant efforts to update their knowledge of words. They were found to be good at scripting; mnemonics as they involve both speaking and writing. The teacher can engage them in reading in the classroom like peer reading, echo reading, providing newspapers, books either fiction or non-fiction.

**Logical** learners preferred to use reasoning and logic and deployed a system approach to learning. They were found to classify and group information to derive meaning and understand the same with factual information to back up. They had the ability to reason and solve problems. They were found to be methodical   Teacher can ask students to simulate a scenario in which they try to address an issue from multiple perspectives.
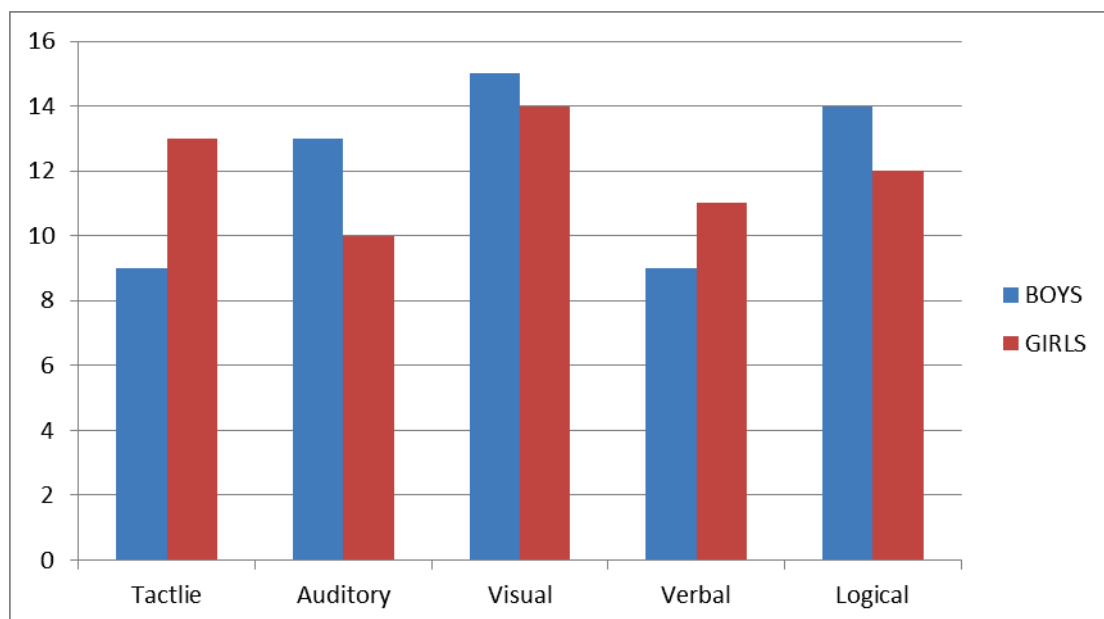


**Figure 4:** Difference in the Learning Preferences of Boys and Girls

Figure depicting the learning preferences based on gender clearly indicated higher preference for Visual, Auditory and Logical among boys and Tactile and Verbal among girls.

Most of the learners function by accommodating combinations of a range of learning styles. Individuals are found to be stronger in certain type of intelligence and weaker in some. Facilitating learning is a challenge to teachers. Teachers must understand that one type of teaching method is not sufficient. Effective teaching strategies are essential in ensuring successful teaching learning process. Teachers need to create opportunities for students to learn effectively and students need to learn in joyful and relaxed environment. It is vital that all learning materials should include opportunities for students to develop their strength and weaken their weakness in each particular intelligence area. It is necessary to assess the effectiveness of our current teaching strategies and consider innovative ways to improve our teaching to enhance the teaching and learning effect.

Optimum learning occurs when content is being delivered catering to dominant intelligences. Teachers need to equip with more flexible approaches. Teaching and learning style have significant effect on quality of instruction. The alternative teaching methods need to strive to cater to the need of the varied learners by creating a conducive environment for students. It would be appropriate for teachers to deploy progressive teaching methodologies in order to align with the learning preferences of the learners to help them in their learning.

Students get connected with their experiences and gain interest in learning language if they are provided with input rich environment. Comprehensive and careful planning of instruction is very important for teaching of language. If students are encouraged in the learning and sense making process through their preferred learning styles, the change and modification of language would predominantly enhance students' performance in learning. The use of games and simulations which is an alternative creative approach in the teaching of English are proven to be effective. With the gradual emphasis on novel and creative teaching methods and approaches in contemporary classroom, many educators and teachers began to use multiple intelligence approach in the teaching styles where it highlights the idea of individual differences both of learners and teachers.

There is no single or absolute method in teaching learning process. Teachers need to use integrated strategies and instructional activities to cater to the needs of the learners in terms with intelligence profile, learning styles and preferences. It is essential that a teacher provides an inclusive and nurturing environment for learners making them realise that all of them are there to learn and to emphasise the fact that a competition does not exist. A lot of teachers today are using problem-based learning strategies that bring groups of students together to work as a team on projects. This approach allows students to try out varied roles, identify their strengths and to move ahead confidently.

Skilled educators need to be flexible and offer choices to students thereby tailoring the lesson plans appropriately. More open ended questions, and activities that promote higher order thinking and creativity, an open, flexible, accepting and challenging environment which encourages inquiry and independent learning, and allows for mistakes in attempting new learning tasks, making full use of multi-disciplinary approach and the creation of enrichment and extension activities are all what the teachers can adopt in the teaching learning process. This would cater to the holistic development of the students with various learning preferences. When teachers adopt novel and innovative strategies, the students become creative, inquisitive, flexible and critical thinkers. This helps them to express themselves in unique ways and explore the world around them. Adopting innovate, progressive and alternative strategies help a skilled educators to maximize the learning according to the learning preferences of the students.

**References:**

1.  Ball, D. & Perry, C. An exploration of individual differences in teachers' temperaments and multiple intelligences. Problems of Education in the 21st Century, (2009),18, 21-32.
2.  Cohen, A.D: Strategies in Learning and Using a Second Language. Essex, U.K.: Longman,1998.
3.  Cornett, C., What You Should Know about Teaching and Learning Styles. Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa, 1983.
4.  Dunn, R. & Dunn, K. ,Teaching elementary students through their individual learning styles: Practical approaches for grades 3 - 6. Allyn & Bacon: Boston,1993.
5.  Johnson, C.C., Kahle, J.B. & Fargo, J.D.,Effective teaching results in increased science achievement for all students. Science Education,(2007), 91, 371-383.
6.  Kolb, D.A. Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development. Englewood Cliff, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall,(1984).
7.  Oxford, R.L., Language Learning Strategies: What Every Teacher Should Know. Boston: Heinle & Heinle,(1990).
8.  Nunan, D. Language teaching methodology. London: Prentice Hall, (1991)..
9.  Reid . J. Learning styles in the ESL-EFL Classroom. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, (2002). pp. 81-84.
10. Stern, H. H. Fundamental Concepts of Language Teaching. London: Oxford University Press. (1983). pp13-14.
11. Rosadah Abd Majid, Noriah M. I. & Zalizan M. J. Students with Different Needs: Implications for English Language Teaching and Learning. Proceeding of the National Seminar on English Language Teaching. Kuala Lumpur: University Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi, (2004).
12. Sellars, M. Students and their learning: initiatives and partnerships. Problems of education in the 21st Century, (2008). 7, 139-146.
13. Stern, H. H. Fundamental Concepts of Language Teaching. London: Oxford University Press. (1983). pp13-14.
14. Suriati Sulaiman & Tajularipin Sulaiman. Enhancing language teaching and learning by keeping individual differences in perspective. International Education Studies, (2010),3(2), 134-142.
15. http://www.imrfjournals.in/arts-education.html#collapse4
16. http://www.imrfjournals.in/arts-education.html#collapse3
17. http://www.imrfjournals.in/arts-education.html#collapse2
18. https://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/gradschool/training/resources/teaching/theories/race
19. https://www.classroom-management-success.org/different-learning-styles.html
20. https://thinkneuroscience.wordpress.com/2013/04/11/the-myth-of-learning-styles/
21. https://chronicle.com/article/Matching-Teaching-Style-to/49497/

***