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When Teaching Meets Learning: Investigating the Impact of Teaching–Learning Style Match on EFL Learners' Motivation

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Abstract: This study examined EFL teachers' and learners' perceptions of how matching teaching and learning styles influences motivation. Using a mixed-methods design, data were collected from six teachers and twenty second-year secondary school students through three surveys (GRLSS, GRTSI, MSLQ) and two interviews. An integrated model aligning teaching and learning styles was implemented, and motivation was measured before and after the intervention. Findings revealed that style alignment significantly enhanced learners' motivation and generated positive perceptions among both teachers and students
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Keywords : EFL instruction; learning styles; motivation; teaching styles

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1. Introduction

Motivation represents a crucial element in language acquisition constituting one of the primary determinants affecting foreign language mastery. Within the context of language acquisition, motivation may be conceptualized as the propelling elements that affect language learners' engagement and persistence. Promoting motivation among EFL students to advance in their language development presents a multifaceted challenge, as numerous factors appear to influence learner motivation in either beneficial or detrimental ways.

In the absence of adequate motivation, even learners possessing exceptional aptitude may fail to achieve sustained objectives; similarly, well-designed curricula and effective pedagogy alone prove insufficient to guarantee academic success (Dornyei, 1998). Gardner (1985) characterizes motivation as the synthesis of dedicated effort, combined with aspirations to master the target language, alongside constructive dispositions toward the language learning process. Research suggests that correlation exists between motivational factors and learning style preferences within educational contexts, as instructional approaches that acknowledge diverse learning orientations tend to enhance student engagement (Tomlinson, 2005).

Numerous EFL students receive limited opportunities to develop autonomous learning competencies or generate innovative responses. They frequently assume passive roles within the educational process and occasionally feel compelled to engage in activities that fail to align with their individual capabilities. This circumstance often leads to diminished motivation, primarily because such assignments do not align with their cognitive processing preferences. Aligning teachers' instructional approaches with students' learning style preferences may help promote intrinsic learning desire through acknowledging individual capabilities, which consequently enhances learner motivation.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Motivation and Foreign Language Learning

The motivation to learn a foreign language maintains consistent connections to learners' perspectives regarding the target language, alongside their requirements and aspirations. Evidence suggests that when learners maintain favorable attitudes toward the target language, their learning outcomes improve substantially. Dorneyi (1996) contends that contemporary research explicitly aims to expand the conceptual framework of language learning motivation and enhance the educational applicability of theoretical models by emphasizing motivation as manifested in classroom learning behaviors. Teachers have consistently prioritized increasing student motivation. As Dorneyi (2001) observes, from a practical standpoint, the most critical question concerning motivation involves not its definition but rather the methods through which it can be enhanced.

Fostering language learning motivation among students may represent one of the most demanding challenges educators encounter, given the heterogeneous nature of learners and their varied motivations for language learning. Numerous researchers have examined teachers' influence on student motivation and emphasize the significant role teachers occupy in enhancing learning motivation. They seek approaches that promote learning and enable student success and accomplishment. Although highly motivated students may not require substantial teacher intervention to sustain classroom engagement, research demonstrates that teacher participation in establishing positive classroom environments contributes significantly to successful learning outcomes. In this regard, Singh and Nath (2005) observe that motivation occupies a central position within the teaching-learning process. It represents, fundamentally, an indispensable component of learning. Teachers often confront the challenge of motivating students toward learning. Therefore, considering various approaches and mechanisms for enhancing motivation within classroom contexts becomes essential.

Contemplating diverse strategies to sustain student motivation in language learning environments and maintain that motivation

represents a significant concern within educational and psychological research. Gardner (2001) asserts that motivation constitutes a fundamental element, alongside language aptitude, in determining success and achievement in language learning classrooms.

Language learning motivation research has progressed through various developmental stages across time. Gardner's (1985) socio-educational model represented pioneering work, distinguishing between integrative and instrumental motivational orientations. According to this theoretical framework, motivation serves as a fundamental concept prompting individuals toward language acquisition. It connects primarily to attitudes individuals maintain toward learning contexts and integrativeness. Therefore, an individual's motivation to acquire a target language directly affects achievement outcomes and is itself influenced by various social psychological variables including attitudes, perceptions, learning style preferences, individual variations, and social interactions.

2.2. The Relationship between Motivation and Learning Styles

Educators typically concentrate on instructional materials within learning contexts. While providing diverse inputs can make instruction engaging for students, the most critical initial responsibility involves understanding students themselves. When teachers comprehend student requirements, they can determine activity appropriateness regarding proficiency levels, interests, benefits, and relevance. They must consider students' individual learning style preferences, previous language learning experiences, linguistic attitudes, and personality characteristics.

According to Kirby (1984), the concept of learning style emerged when researchers sought methods to align course delivery or instructional approaches and materials with individual learner requirements. Therefore, pedagogical approaches, teacher attitudes, assessment methods, instructional resources, individual and collaborative work arrangements, along with additional factors, directly

influence student achievement and motivation (Clement et al., 1994; Pintrich et al., 1994). The connection between learning styles and motivation received considerable attention in recent decades. For instance, researchers identified a relationship between deep-level learning approaches (Ames & Archer, 1988) and intrinsic motivation. Corder (1981) suggests that when motivation exists, successful second language acquisition becomes assured. Identifying students' learning style preferences assists educators in understanding the variety of learner preferences, enabling them to consider these factors when designing materials or developing activities to accommodate most classroom styles. Teachers should also assist learners in discovering their predominant learning style preferences, as this facilitates their individual learning processes. In summary, when students understand their learning style preferences, they employ strategies that reduce stress and anxiety while simultaneously developing feelings of comfort, interest, and motivation.

2.3. Improving Motivation by Matching Teaching with Learning Styles

The match and mismatch of teaching and learning styles represents a somewhat contentious topic within research communities, as empirical findings both support and challenge the matching hypothesis. Although learning styles research has received considerable attention, the potential relationship between teaching and learning styles continues to lack substantial experimental and empirical verification.

Literature review reveals, however, that students achieve optimal learning outcomes when instructional methods align with their learning style preferences. Consequently, matching teaching and learning styles creates ideal conditions for effective learning (McMahon, 1999). When educators attempt to accommodate various learning styles by modifying their personal approach and instructional strategies, they provide diverse tasks and activities addressing different learning style requirements. Therefore, all learners receive tasks appealing to their learning style preferences.

Similarly, aligning teaching and learning styles establishes a learning environment conducive and appropriate for effective learning. Nevertheless, such alignment may not necessarily represent the essential factor for effective learning, as exposing students to diverse and contrasting strategies is believed to produce more competent learners.

Numerous researchers conclude that the match of learning and teaching styles performs a significant function in empowering students to optimize their educational experiences, enhance achievement, and increase motivation. Reid (1995) proposes that any discrepancy between learning and teaching styles results in failure, discouragement, and demotivation. Harmonizing teaching approaches with learning styles provides equitable opportunities for all students within classroom settings and develops learner self-awareness. Aligning teaching and learning styles is regarded as a component of learner-centered instruction and needs-based pedagogy. Supporting learner-centered classrooms and implementing learning style approaches within instruction improves student interest and motivation, primarily because it enables alternative teaching strategies designed to accommodate diverse learners.

Discrepancies between teaching and learning styles potentially result in student disengagement, discouragement, inadequate assessment performance, reduced motivation, diminished self-esteem, and decisions to withdraw from courses or programs (Oxford et al., 1991). Conversely, aligning teaching and learning styles can facilitate positive learner responses to instructional methods, encourage enhanced collaboration among students, and minimize classroom management challenges. Matching teaching styles to learning styles appears supported by various studies involving different instructional types, all appealing to learners' style preferences. Through collaborative efforts between teachers and students in identifying student learning styles and aligning instruction accordingly, learners can achieve more effective learning outcomes.

Within EFL instruction, misalignments frequently occur, producing significant effects on learning quality and student attitudes toward the subject (Felder & Henriques, 1995). When examining the effects of implementing individualized, learning style-based homework assignments on achievement and attitudes, Minotti (2005) reports enhanced achievement levels and improved attitude assessment scores following intervention

Dornyei (2005) proposes several approaches for matching teaching and learning styles. Teachers can enhance the effectiveness of classroom learning by adapting instructional tasks to suit diverse learner needs. This involves identifying students' learning styles and understanding their language learning preferences to optimize learning outcomes. Similarly, recognizing teachers' own teaching styles contributes to more effective instructional alignment. Teachers should also encourage students to broaden their repertoire of learning styles by engaging with approaches they may have previously avoided. Moreover, empowering students through explicit instruction in learning strategies that align with their individual styles fosters greater autonomy and overall learning effectiveness.

Significant misalignment frequently occurs between teachers' and learners' styles, producing serious consequences including demotivation and reduced academic achievement. Various misalignment types are identified by Dornyei (2005). He mentions that conflicts in the learning process often arise from discrepancies between students' learning styles and various educational elements. One common issue is the mismatch between learners' preferred styles and the instructional strategies or methods employed by teachers, often referred to as a style conflict. Similarly, a misalignment between students' learning styles and the curriculum design can hinder progress, for example, when analytical learners struggle with a curriculum that neglects systematic grammar instruction. In addition, discrepancies may occur between learning styles and specific language tasks, such as visual learners being required to engage primarily in auditory activities. Conflicts can also emerge when students' beliefs about effective learning differ from their styles, as in the case of analytically oriented learners who assume their method is universally superior. Finally,

inconsistencies between learners' styles, strategies, and actual abilities can further impede their language learning effectiveness.

Understanding that the most significant undesirable consequence from implementing learning style concepts involves teachers often considering styles as fixed characteristics is critically important, as this perspective would restrict students' capacity to learn through approaches outside their preferred styles. Expanding learners' perspectives by intentionally engaging them in activities beyond their preferred styles may prove valuable, as individual differences may evolve over time. To facilitate instruction, teachers can develop various teaching methods and activities, alternating among them periodically. As Grasha (1996) proposes, certain misalignments between students' learning styles and teachers' teaching styles can transform, when appropriately managed by educators, into creative mismatches that provide learners with varied situations.

3. Methodology

Given that this investigation sought to examine teachers' and learners' perceptions regarding teaching-learning style match and emphasize the significance of this match on learning motivation, it employed a mixed methods approach combining qualitative and quantitative data methods and procedures. Data collection were collected through three distinct survey instruments, the Grasha-Riechmann Learning Styles Scale (GRLSS), the Grasha-Riechmann Teaching Styles Inventory (GRTSI), and the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ), alongside two interviews.

Twenty (20) second-year secondary school students and six (06) EFL teachers in Biskra participated in this investigation. Participants were randomly selected for research participation. Initially, GRLSS and GRTSI were administered to determine learners' learning styles and teachers' teaching styles respectively, measuring the frequency of match and mismatch between teaching and learning styles. Subsequently, the MSLQ was administered to students to assess their

motivation levels before the intervention, which consisted of an integrated model combining teaching and learning styles. Within this model, teaching styles and learning styles were matched, and instruction was diversified based on learner differences. The MSLQ was administered again following the intervention phase to evaluate student motivation. Finally, two interviews were conducted with teachers and students aiming to generate comprehensive information regarding teachers' and students' perceptions and attitudes concerning teaching-learning style alignment and its impact on motivation within EFL classrooms.

4. Results and Discussion

Motivation constitutes a critical factor in successful learning processes. Every educator endeavors to optimize learner motivation by establishing positive learning environments. Creating such environments requires more than merely appropriate physical settings where teaching and learning occur; rather, it encompasses numerous additional dimensions. Among these, we propose teachers' teaching styles and classroom methods, learners' learning style preferences, teacher-learner relationships and rapport, and learners' attitudes toward learning generally and learning materials specifically.

Study results revealed that employing diverse methods accommodating learner differences holds considerable importance. It demonstrated direct influence on learner motivation. Study participants displayed moderate overall motivation and self-regulation indicators in the pre-test. Post-test mean scores, however, demonstrated statistically significant changes across all MSLQ scales. The MSLQ mean scores increased from moderate to high levels, with a notable decrease in the Test Anxiety scale as presented in Table 1:

Table 1: Students' Pre and Post-Treatment Scores on MSLQ

	Pre-Test Results			Post-Test Results		
	Mean	**Sd**	**Rank**	**Mean**	**Sd**	**Rank**
a. Self-Efficacy	3.26	0.95	Medium	4.34	0.73	High
b. Intrinsic Value	3.78	0.81	High	4.31	0.71	High
c. Test Anxiety	3.65	0.93	High	4.19	0.55	High
d.Cognitive Strategy Use	3.37	0.80	Medium	4.12	0.89	High
e. Self-Regulation	2.29	0.64	Low	4.32	0.54	High
Overall Scale Results	**3.27**	**0.52**	**Medium**	**4.25**	**0.08**	**High**

Students' overall scale results demonstrated considerable increases in post-intervention scores. The cumulative nature of the MSLQ enables examination of all motivational constructs through analyzing the general scale mean score. Pre-intervention and post-intervention results were compared using t-tests for dependent samples to verify statistical significance of differences. As observed in Table 2 below, the overall scale mean increased by (M=0.99) in post-intervention results. The mean difference between pre and post-intervention MSLQ results was tested for significance using T-Testing.

Table 2: T-Test for Pre and Post Treatment MSLQ Results

Mean Difference	SD	SD Error Mean	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
0.99	0.39	0.028	3.52	4	.02

T-test results indicate the obtained t-value of 3.52 with corresponding probability value (Sig=0.02) falls below the threshold p-value of 0.05 ($p=0.02<0.05$). This demonstrates the mean difference (M=0.99) achieves statistical significance. Consequently, the increase in post-intervention scores can be attributed to the intervention. Stated differently, implementing the integrated model of teaching and learning, wherein teaching styles and learning styles were coordinated, significantly impacted learner motivation levels.

Numerous researchers have investigated individual learning preferences and how instructional methods can be tailored to accommodate different styles, asserting that when students' learning styles are identified and addressed by educators, students become motivated and willing to achieve enhanced outcomes, creating promising environments for both teaching and learning. In this respect, Huxland and Land (2000) maintain that once instructors understand their students' learning styles, they can develop approaches, methods, and sequences likely to make learning more active and engaging for students.

When teachers identify students' learning style preferences, they adapt classroom methods to optimally align with each student's learning style by varying instructional materials and teaching methods. Many studies on ELT have determined that effective EFL instruction mandates knowledge regarding learners' learning requirements, individual learning differences, required teaching methods, learner preferences, and necessary teaching materials required to address learner needs within educational settings (Felder & Spurlin, 2005; Zhang, 2006).

Regarding teacher and student interviews, both groups emphasized motivation's importance within classroom contexts. Interview findings revealed that both teachers and students maintained positive attitudes toward aligning teaching styles with learning styles and predominantly believed it exerted positive influence on motivation as illustrated in Figures 1 and 2 below:

Figure 1: Teachers' Views about the Effect of Matching Teaching Styles with Learning

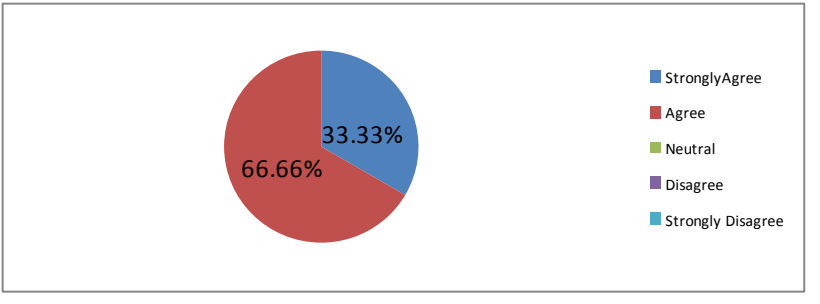
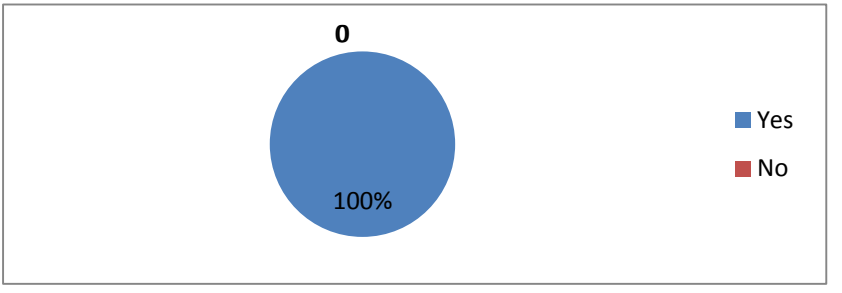


Figure 2: Learners' Views about the Effect of Matching Teaching Styles with Learning Styles on Motivation Styles on Motivation

Teachers recognized that aligning teaching styles with learning styles entailed addressing learner requirements and responding to learning preferences, producing positive impacts on motivation. This perspective was also expressed by Gilakjani (2012), who proposes that when teaching styles align with learning styles, students become motivated and actively engaged in English language learning**.**

Divergence between learning and teaching styles may cause learning failure and frustration of learning potential. Addressing learner preferences can be accomplished by employing diverse learning materials and various activity types. In this regard, Sabeh et al. (2011) propose that respecting alternative styles and responding to different styles by incorporating appropriate strategies could facilitate learning enhancement.

Integrating innovative and suitable instructional methods helped students learn within learner-centered atmospheres based on social interaction, which improved learner motivation and attitudes toward EFL. However, some teachers emphasized the need to highlight primary obstacles preventing them from matching teaching styles with learning styles, including large class sizes, crowded classrooms,



extensive syllabi, time limitations, and numerous pedagogical responsibilities.

5. Implications and Recommendations

The aforementioned results demonstrated the significance of teacher-learner style alignment within EFL classrooms, proving effective in fostering student motivation and interest toward subject matter. To this end, learners' learning style preferences should receive consideration when preparing lesson plans and activities. Classroom instruction should be diversified and designed to correspond with the majority of student preferences. Hence, to create superior teaching/learning environments, improving instructional quality and teaching methods becomes necessary.

It is recommended that teachers align their teaching styles with learning styles to foster motivation and establish positive learning atmospheres that increase classroom interaction. Visual aids and contemporary technological devices might be employed to attract learner attention and enhance cognitive and memory processes. Moreover, teachers should vary classroom activities and avoid prolonged lecturing. Stated more precisely, lesson plans should accommodate learning styles by incorporating various activity types to appeal to different learning style preferences. Additionally, training programs should be provided to teachers by the Ministry of National Education to equip teachers with current information regarding teaching methods, student needs, learning differences, classroom management teacher-learner relationships, and teaching practices.

6. Conclusion

Study findings revealed teacher and student awareness regarding the importance of teaching and learning styles within EFL classrooms and clearly emphasized their positive attitudes toward style match. Results also confirmed the positive effect of alignment on learner motivation and interest in English acquisition. This led us to emphasize that teaching/learning process success is primarily determined by learning and teaching style compatibility. Identifying learning styles will assist teachers in planning lessons, adapting

teaching styles, varying instruction, and providing learners with necessary educational support and resources that would enhance their motivation and learning generally.

Algerian secondary school EFL teachers need to understand learners' differences and expectations and attempt to modify and enrich their teaching styles and expand their instructional scope, as this may help them develop comprehensive perspectives of learners' abilities and learning capacities. Therefore, considering learners' learning styles is not difficult, as teaching itself constitutes a matter of style.

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