



Match or Mismatch Between Learning Styles of Prep-Class EFL Students and EFL Teachers

Ferhan Karabuga

(ferhankarabuga@gmail.com)

Kahramanmaraş Sutcu Imam University, Turkey

Abstract

Learning styles, having the capacity to affect the learning process to a great extent, need to be taken into consideration, if efficient instruction is aimed for in ESL/EFL classrooms (Oxford & Ehrman, 1995). Bearing the importance of learning styles in mind in the process of language learning, the present study aimed to determine the learning styles of 132 prep-class EFL students and 15 English language teachers using the Grasha-Riechmann Learning Style Survey (Riechmann & Grasha, 1974) and the Grasha Teaching Style Survey (Grasha, 1994), respectively. Besides, the study was conducted with the aim of determining whether a mismatch occurs between students' learning styles and teachers' teaching styles through surveys and interviews. The results showed that students favoured the collaborative, dependent and competitive learning styles, while their teachers favoured the personal model teaching style. The results of the survey and interviews suggested that there was a match between the learning styles of students and the teaching styles of teachers to some extent and that teachers were of the view that they could balance their teaching in a way that would accommodate different learning styles.

1 Introduction

Being one of the most challenging activities that a person has to deal with, language learning is a process that is affected by various factors, which differ with respect to the learners themselves, the learning context, teachers, materials, and so forth. Al-Hebaishi (2012) suggests that people hold more distinct features than similar ones and that formal education is the most convenient environment in which these distinct features become clearer and more visible. The awareness of these factors inevitably helps ones who are involved in the process of language learning or teaching because of the fact that each person is unique and brings various variables into that process, which draws our attention to the individual differences. Individual differences can simply be described as personal characteristics, which tag someone as a distinct or unprecedented human being (Dörnyei, 2005). Individual differences can be examined under the categories of learner styles, learner strategies and affective variables as well as other major factors affecting the process of language learning (Ehrman, Beaver, & Oxford, 2003). As an individual difference, learner styles are claimed to play a significant role in determining the failure or success of the teaching or learning process (Sarasin, 1999).

Learning styles are defined by Dörnyei (2005) as “a profile of the individual’s approach to learning, a blueprint of the habitual or preferred way the individual perceives, interacts with and responds to the learning environment” (p. 121). Dunn and Griggs (1988, cited in Kara, 2009), defining learning styles as biologically and developmentally enforced set of characteristics, point

out that learning styles have the capacity to make the same teaching method or material wonderful for some and terrible for others. The idea of learning styles gained an enormous popularity among researchers in the field of education especially with the development of constructivist views of learning. In the field of language teaching or learning, learner styles are of crucial interest among researchers. In this respect, Oxford and Ehrman (1995) hold that efficient instruction in an ESL/EFL classroom necessitates an understanding of the learners' individual differences such as their learning styles.

Reid (1995) puts forward two major hypotheses about learning styles in EFL/ESL classrooms. The first hypothesis suggests that all learners have their own learning styles, weaknesses and strengths. The second hypothesis proposes that a mismatch between the learning style of learners and the teaching style of teachers leads to failure, frustration or demotivation in the process of learning/teaching. Regarding the second hypothesis, there has been a great deal of support coming from the research carried out on this issue. Many authors hold the belief that mismatches between teaching styles and learning styles may occur frequently and that such a situation may result in bad effects on learning, attitudes to the class or to English language (e.g. Ehrman, 1996; Peacock, 2001; Oxford, Hollaway, & Horton-Murillo, 1992). In this respect, Dunn and Dunn (1979) claim that when learners at all levels are taught with the help of methods that complement their learning characteristics, they become motivated and tend to achieve more academically. Reid also adds that if learning styles match with teaching styles, this situation enables all learners an equal chance in the classroom and contributes also to student self-awareness (1987, as cited in Peacock, 2001). In order to achieve a match between teaching styles and learning styles, some authors (Felder & Henriques, 1995; Peacock, 2001) propose that teachers balance their instructional methods, which means accommodating all learner styles.

The common point in all of the studies regarding learning styles and teaching styles, and the match or mismatch between them is that both learning styles and teaching styles are significant parts of the teaching/learning process and that mismatches may negatively affect learning, motivation, attitude and/or achievement. In the field of language learning/teaching, a number of studies that deal with the issue of matching teaching styles with learning styles have been carried out. Peacock (2001) conducted a study of EFL students and EFL teachers with the aim of investigating Reid's second hypothesis. Collecting data through Reid's (1987) Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire, interviews and tests, that study revealed that there was a mismatch, and that students and teachers complained about this situation by claiming that such a mismatch caused them to feel frustrated and affected their learning.

Sabeh, Bahous, Bacha, & Nabhani (2011) focused on whether there was a match between students' learning styles and teachers' teaching styles and carried out the study with ESL students and their instructors in an intensive English course. The result confirmed Reid's hypothesis and suggested that teachers should respond to different learning styles by accommodating some strategies that could promote learning.

Likewise, Gilakjani (2012) claimed that determining learning styles would give students the opportunity to realize their strengths and weaknesses and how they could benefit from them. Teachers could also strengthen weaker learning styles. The study conducted by Gilakjani (2012) aimed to determine learning styles and teaching styles, and the possible match or mismatch between those styles in an ESL/EFL classroom. The study basically presents pedagogical implications that need to be taken into consideration in EFL/ESL classroom, although the author suggests that matching learning styles with teaching styles alone does not guarantee greater learner achievement.

Kara (2009) investigated whether the same situation could be observed with students in the ELT department and their instructors in the Turkish context. The study also aimed to find out whether the possible mismatch could lead to failure, frustration and demotivation. The results of the study indicated that there was a match between the learning style of the learners and teaching style of the teachers. Moreover, the results confirmed Reid's hypothesis that the students claimed that they feel unhappy and stressed when their instructors do not teach in accordance with their

avored style. The instructors participating in the study remarked that they made changes in the presentation or the type of activity or materials when they encountered a mismatch.

Although previous research adds to our understanding of the importance of determining learning styles and teaching styles and matching them, there are several points that remain unaddressed or lacking, which provide the basis for the present study to be carried out. First of all, nearly all studies carried out in EFL/ESL context drew from Reid's (1987) inventory, which aimed to determine auditory, visual, kinesthetic, tactile, group and individual learner styles. Those studies tried to determine the teaching styles of teachers with the same inventory. However, the present study draws from the Grasha-Riechmann Learning Style Scale (Riechmann & Grasha, 1974), which is mainly based on students' perceptions regarding actual classroom activities and interactions between students and teachers rather than an assessment of personality or cognitive traits. Grasha (1996) deals with the issue of learning styles under six learning style categories as independent, avoidant, collaborative, dependent, competitive and participant. In this regard, independent learners are thought to prefer working alone and thinking for themselves. This learning style requires teachers who have facilitator, delegator and personal model teaching styles. On the other hand, dependent learners are thought to learn only what is required and are dependent upon the teacher and other friends for support. Therefore, they learn better when they are taught by teachers with expert or formal authority teaching styles. Avoidant learners are defined as the ones who have no enthusiasm towards learning and classroom activities. Nevertheless, collaborative learners are expected to share their ideas and talents with others and enjoy cooperation. They demand tasks or activities that can be achieved through cooperation, projects, pair or group work. The demands of this style can be best met by facilitator teachers. Competitive learners compete with other students and learn just with the aim of performing better than other students and being the center of attention. These features require expert or formal authority teaching styles. Lastly, participant learners like participating in classroom activities and try to be a good member of the class, which demand expert and personal model teaching styles.

Besides, the present study determines the teaching styles of teachers through Teaching Style Survey by Grasha (1994). Teaching styles are divided into five categories, which describe teachers as authority, expert, facilitator, personal model and delegator. Expert teachers are the ones who deal with transmitting detailed knowledge and try to maintain their status as experts among the students. On the other hand, the teachers having the formal authority provide positive and negative feedback and they are mainly concerned with the correct, acceptable and standard ways of learning. Facilitator teaching style mainly focuses on the interaction between student and teacher and they are expected to guide students through asking questions, making suggestions, and encouraging cooperative and independent activities. Personal model teachers try to direct students by establishing a prototype in terms of how to think and behave by showing how to do things and encouraging students to imitate him/her. Lastly, delegator teaching style involves working independently and teachers acting as a resource person.

The present study seeks to investigate in detail what each learning style expects from teachers in an EFL classroom, to what extent they are happy with the present situation in their classrooms, and to what extent their teachers respond to their expectations. The study does not put learners into the focal point alone, but also deals with teachers to have an understanding of how they define themselves as language teachers, to what extent they are aware of different learning styles in their classrooms and whether they balance their teaching according to different learning styles.

2 Method

The present study was conducted with a descriptive research design and it employed both qualitative and quantitative research methods to reach the aims, which are discussed in detail under the subsequent headings of participants, instruments, data collection procedure and data analysis.

2.1 Participants

The present study was conducted with 132 prep-class students and 15 English language instructors attending the School of Foreign Languages at a Turkish university in the 2013–2014 Fall term. The present study did not take the variables of gender, age and department into consideration. The students were identified by convenience sampling strategy as there were sixteen prep-classes already existing at that time and five classes participated in this study. These classes took English lessons from four teachers a week. Among the teacher participants, there were some teachers who had lessons for two of those classes at the same time. However, the learning styles of students were compared with the teachers who were giving lessons in these classes, not with all the teachers.

2.2 Instruments

This study benefited from qualitative and quantitative data collection tools used to reach the aims mentioned before. With the aim of determining the learning styles of student participants, the Learner Style Scale (Grasha, 1974) was used to collect the data. 116 of the 132 learner participants were interviewed, using the questions prepared by the researcher beforehand. Likewise, the teaching styles of instructors were determined using the Teaching Style Survey (Grasha, 1974) and they were interviewed following the determination of their teaching styles.

The Learner Style Scale used in the study was adapted in Turkish, since the students had low proficiency level in English (i.e. elementary). The adaptation of this scale into Turkish had been done by Sarıtaş and Sural (2010) with the aim of showing that this scale could be applied to university students in Turkish. The language validity of the scale was found to be .62 and reliability coefficient was .802. Similarly, the interviews with students were conducted in Turkish on paper. The scale consisted of 60 Likert-type items with a five-point scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree, and each style had 10 items that described the characteristics of that style. The ten items for each learning style were distributed systematically in the scale and that distribution is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. The distribution of items for each learning style in the Grasha-Riechmann Scale

		LEARNING STYLES					
		Independent	Avoidant	Collaborative	Dependent	Competitive	Participant
ITEM NO	1	2	3	4	5	6	
	7	8	9	10	11	12	
	13	14	15	16	17	18	
	19	20	21	22	23	24	
	25	26	27	28	29	30	
	31	32	33	34	35	36	
	37	38	39	40	41	42	
	43	44	45	46	47	48	
	49	50	51	52	53	54	
	55	56	57	58	59	60	

On the other hand, the Teaching Style Survey and interviews were administered/conducted in English, as it was thought that the language would present no problem for the language instructors. The scale had 40 Likert-type items and each teaching style involved eight items that would describe their characteristics, which were distributed systematically in the scale. The distribution of items for each teaching style is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. The distribution of items for each teaching style in the Grasha scale

		TEACHING STYLES				
ITEM NO	Expert	Formal Authority	Personal Model	Facilitator	Delegator	
	1	2	3	4	5	
	6	7	8	9	10	
	11	12	13	14	15	
	16	17	18	19	20	
	21	22	23	24	25	
	26	27	28	29	30	
	31	32	33	34	35	
	36	37	38	39	40	

The interviews with teachers were conducted via questions on paper that were prepared beforehand and teachers were asked to respond to those questions in written form.

2.3 Procedure

The procedure for collecting data was carried out in the regular classes of the students. First of all, the students were given the Learning Style Scale in order to determine their learning styles. Then, teachers were asked to complete the Teaching Style Survey. To find out the learning styles of students and the teaching style of teachers, the questionnaire data were analysed, and the students and teachers were labeled in terms of their styles. Upon determining the styles, the students and teachers were interviewed to triangulate the findings.

2.4 Data analysis

The data obtained through data collection tools employed in the present study were analysed by using both qualitative and quantitative analysis techniques. The Learning Style Scale and the Teaching Style Survey were analysed using SPSS in order to determine the styles of participants. The learning styles of all the students participating in this study were determined based upon the low, moderate and high scales of the Grasha-Riechmann Learning Style Survey, which are presented in Table 3 for each learning style. The findings were compared with those scores.

Table 3. Low, moderate and high scales of the Grasha-Riechmann Learning Style Survey

	Low	Moderate	High
Independent	1.0–2.7	2.8–3.8	3.9–5.0
Avoidant	1.0–1.8	1.9–3.1	3.2–5.0
Collaborative	1.0–2.7	2.8–3.4	3.5–5.0
Dependent	1.0–2.9	3.0–4.0	4.1–5.0
Competitive	1.0–1.7	1.8–2.8	2.9–5.0
Participant	1.0–3.0	3.1–4.1	4.2–5.0

Similarly, the teaching styles of participant teachers were determined based upon the low, moderate and high scales of the Grasha-Riechmann Teaching Style Survey. The scales at issue are presented in Table 4 for each teaching style and the findings are given based on these scores.

Table 4. Low, moderate and high scales of the Grasha Teaching Style Survey

	Low	Moderate	High
Expert	1.0-3.2	3.3-4.7	4.8-7.0
Formal authority	1.0-4.0	4.1-5.4	5.5-7.0
Personal Model	1.0-4.3	4.4-5.7	5.8-7.0
Facilitator	1.0-3.7	3.8-5.3	5.4-7.0
Delegator	1.0-2.6	2.7-4.2	4.3-7.0

The interviews conducted with students and teachers were analysed through content analysis. According to the responses given by students and teachers, some headings were created and similar statements that fitted those headings were summed according to how many times they were stated and the frequencies were calculated.

3 Findings and discussion

To reach the aims of the study, the data obtained through the scales and interviews were analysed and findings are presented in the following.

3.1 Determination of the learning styles of students and the teaching styles of teachers

First of all, the learning styles of students were determined through the analysis of the Learning Style Scale data and the learners were categorised according to their learning styles that were determined by calculating the responses of the participants to each item in the scale. The findings regarding the learning styles of students are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Students’ mean scores on the Grasha-Riechmann Learning Style Survey

		Independent		Avoidant		Collaborative		Dependent		Competitive		Participant	
Participants	N	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank
Students	132	3.7	Mod- erate	2.8	Mod- erate	4.0	High	4.1	High	3.6	High	3.5	Mod- erate

As illustrated in Table 5, the most common learning styles among prep-class students attending the study are observed to be collaborative, dependent and competitive styles as those styles were found to have high ranks when compared to other styles. To determine the learning style of each participant separately, the data were analysed and percentages for each style were determined, which are presented in Figure 1. The frequencies and percentages presented in Figure 1 indicate that the learner participants mostly have collaborative, dependent and competitive styles.

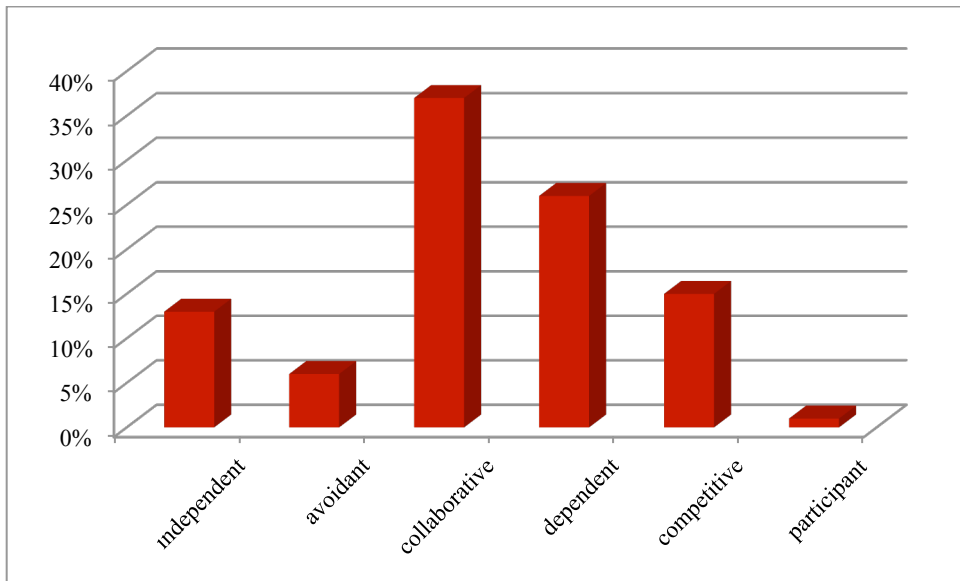


Fig. 1. Frequencies and percentages of learner participants’ dominant learning styles

To have a deeper understanding of learners’ learning styles, the learners were interviewed in terms of how they think that they learn better and were required to define themselves as language learners. In accordance with the properties of each learning style put forward by Riechmann and Grasha (1974), the responses of 116 of the 132 students were analysed and some headings were created, which in turn paved the way for calculating frequencies and percentages. The results are presented in Table 6.

According to the percentages and frequencies presented in Table 6, the students are mostly of the view that they learn better when they participate in various activities and that the activities conducted in the classroom trigger their interest and motivation towards learning. Those responses match the properties of the participant learning style, which has the highest percentage. That style is followed by the dependent learning style, as 26% of the students claim that their learning is mostly dependent upon the teacher and his/her explanations. Some of them even state that teacher is their source of information and there is no need to do projects or activities in the classroom. Although the collaborative learning style had the highest percentage according to the results obtained through Learning Style Survey, only 17% of the students state that working with others or teachers on projects or activities would contribute to their learning much more. Table 6 suggests

that the lowest percentage belongs to the avoidant students, as only a few students claim that they have no interest in the learning content. One of the students even state that “neither teacher nor activities catch my attention and I really get bored in the classroom no matter what the teacher or my friends do in the classroom.”

Table 6. Findings regarding the responses of students to the question of how they learn better

Headings	Referred learning style	f	(%)
Just by listening to teacher explanation	Dependent	31	26.7
Taking part in various learning activities	Participant	35	30.1
Cooperating with others, projects, group working	Collaborative	20	17.2
Not enjoying to participate in activities	Avoidant	7	6
Preferring to work alone	Independent	15	12.9
Getting rewards or competing with others	Competitive	8	6.8

In addition, teachers participating in the study were interviewed and asked what type of learners they had mostly in their classrooms and they were required to describe their students' learning styles. Teachers' responses mostly paid attention to dependent learners, since most of the teachers claimed that their students preferred teacher-centered classrooms in which the teacher was the source of knowledge and authority. A sample response given by one of the teachers is as follows:

Our students show a tendency towards styles that they were accustomed to when they were at secondary or high school. In this regard, the teacher writes the information on the board and transmits the grammar subject. Dialogs or collaborative activities do not make sense to our students.

Besides, only two teachers stated that their students enjoyed actively participating in classroom activities and learned better when they shared their ideas through cooperative projects or group work.

Upon determining the styles of learners, the data related to the teaching styles of teacher participants were analysed and the results are presented in Table 7. Table 7 suggests that the teachers in the present study are observed to have the styles of expert, facilitator and delegator.

Table 7. Teachers' mean scores on the Grasha Teaching Style Survey

Participants	N	Expert		Authority		Personal Model		Facilitator		Delegator	
		Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank
Teachers	15	5.4	High	5.1	Moderate	5.7	Moderate	5.6	High	5.1	High

Besides, the data were analysed in terms of frequencies and percentages for each style, which are shown in Figure 2, and the findings show that the highest percentage among teachers belongs to the style of personal model, which is followed by the styles of expert, formal authority and facilitator, while the style of delegator has the lowest percentage among teachers.

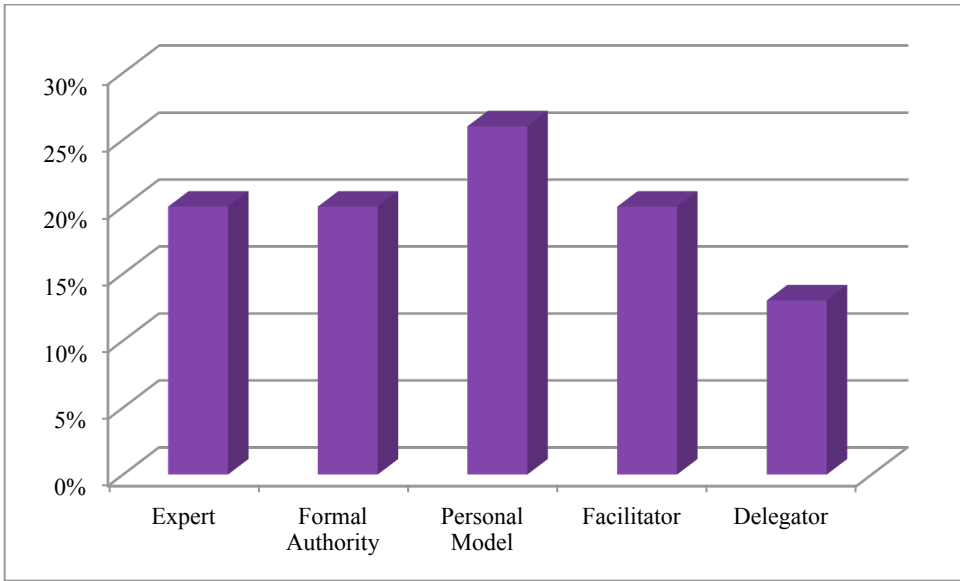


Fig. 2. Frequencies and percentages of teacher participants' dominant teaching styles

To support the findings obtained through the Teaching Style Survey, teachers were asked to explain an English lesson they were teaching step by step. In this way, the study aimed to determine what teaching styles teachers exhibited in their real classrooms. In accordance with the teachers' responses, it was found that the teachers mostly adopted expert and personal model styles in their classrooms, since almost all teachers stated that they conducted English lessons in three steps: presentation, production and practice. The presentation and production steps were described as completely teacher-centered and students were expected to observe and emulate their teachers, who exhibited expert and personal model teaching styles. These findings seem to be in agreement with the findings of the survey.

3.2 Match or mismatch between learning styles and teaching styles

With the aim of finding out whether there was a match or mismatch between the learning styles of learners and the teaching styles of teachers, the data were analysed and the mean scores of each class on learning style were determined separately, which are presented in Table 8. According to the results in Table 8, most of the students in Class 1 state that they are collaborative and competitive learners. However, the students in the second class are found to be collaborative, dependent and competitive learners. Similarly, Table 8 suggests that the students in Class 3 and Class 4 are collaborative, dependent and competitive learners. Lastly, the students in the fifth class mostly have the styles of independent, collaborative, dependent, and competitive.

Table 8. Mean scores of each class in terms of learning styles

CLASS	N	Independent		Avoidant		Collaborative		Dependent		Competitive		Participant	
		Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank
Class 1	26	3.7	Moderate	2.7	Moderate	3.8	High	3.9	Moderate	3.3	High	3.5	Moderate
Class 2	27	3.7	Moderate	2.9	Moderate	3.9	High	4.1	High	3.6	High	3.4	Moderate
Class 3	25	3.8	Moderate	2.7	Moderate	4.2	High	4.1	High	4.0	High	3.6	Moderate
Class 4	27	3.6	Moderate	3.0	Moderate	3.9	High	4.2	High	3.6	High	3.3	Moderate
Class 5	27	3.9	High	2.4	Moderate	4.2	High	4.1	High	3.4	High	3.8	Moderate

These results were compared to the teaching styles of the teachers who taught these classes one by one to see if there was a match or mismatch between the learning styles of the students and the teaching styles of the teachers. The dominant learning styles of each class and the teaching styles of the teachers for each class are shown in Table 9.

Table 9. Comparison between dominant learning styles and teaching styles for each class

Class	Dominant learning style	Teachers of the class
Class 1	Collaborative-competitive	Facilitator-personal model-expert
Class 2	Collaborative-dependent-competitive	Facilitator-delegator-formal authority
Class 3	Collaborative-dependent-competitive	Expert-facilitator-personal model
Class 4	Collaborative-dependent-competitive	Delegator-formal authority-personal model
Class 5	Independent-collaborative-dependent competitive	Personal model-expert- facilitator

Taking the demands of each learning style into consideration with regard to teaching styles, all the classes attending the study are observed to have a match in some way in terms of learning and teaching styles. The teaching styles of their teachers seem to meet the demands of each of the learning styles determined in the classes.

To have a deeper understanding in terms of whether there was a match or mismatch between the learning styles and the teaching styles, each class was interviewed. The students were asked to state to what extent their learning demands or needs were met by their teachers or whether they were satisfied with their situation in terms of their teachers' teaching styles. The results for this question are presented in Table 10 for each class with frequencies and percentages.

Table 10. Findings regarding the students' responses on their satisfaction in terms of their teachers' teaching styles

Classes	N	f			(%)		
		Satisfactory	Okay	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Okay	Unsatisfactory
Class 1	21	11	4	6	52	19	28.5
Class 2	25	19	2	4	76	8	16
Class 3	25	10	6	9	40	24	36
Class 4	23	13	6	4	56	26	17
Class 5	22	14	4	4	63	18	18
TOTAL	116	67	22	27	57.7	18.9	23.2

As shown in Table 10, 57.7% of the students participating in the present study state that they are happy with the teaching styles of their teachers and that they think their teachers meet their needs and demands. On the other hand, 23.2% of the students are of the view that their demands are met to some extent and that they need more. Lastly, some students (18.9%) claim that their teachers' teaching styles do not satisfy them.

Similarly, teachers were interviewed to determine whether there was a match or mismatch between their teaching styles and the learning styles of their students. The teachers' responses were analysed and it was found that most of the teachers held the belief that their teaching style appealed to their students' learning styles. The basis for this view is that they claimed that they benefited from different activities or techniques that would prevent an ongoing mismatch between their teaching styles and students' learning styles.

However, two teachers claimed that there was a mismatch between their teaching styles and their students' learning styles. They claimed that their students preferred to have a passive role in a classroom that was completely directed by the teachers. They also stated that they wanted to conduct student-centered classes in which students actively participated in the activities, shared their thoughts or ideas and became autonomous learners. They were observed to complain about the lack of active students in their classrooms. One of those teachers stated his thought as follows: "My teaching style is clearly in a way that tries to activate students because I think that humans learn best when they are active. This may lead to a mismatch for the students who prefer a rather receptive learning."

Following that, teachers were also asked to state to what extent they could respond to demands of all types of learners and what they did to meet those demands. Teachers stated that they could respond to the majority of the students in their classrooms through accommodating learning materials in a way that would involve almost all the students. A few teachers added that some students did not want to participate in classroom activities no matter what they did, and therefore they ignored those types of learners. Those problematic students in fact refer to the avoidant students. Some comments made by the teachers on this issue are as follows:

We certainly have students whose demands or expectations could not be met by us. But, we should be contingent upon the majorities.

I am doing my best to find a compromise. However, the curriculum restricts us in terms of appealing to all of the students in our classes.

By varying activities, I can respond to. However, what I think more important than matching styles is to show each learner that his/her success in learning a language is of utmost importance to the teacher, i.e. the learner must have the conviction that his/her needs are addressed.

As pointed out in the comments, teachers are of the view that it may seem impossible to involve all the students in classroom activities and it is possible that mismatches occur. However, teachers seem to be aware of these situations and they think that they could overcome mismatches by presenting alternatives in terms of learning materials and activities.

4 Conclusion

When the qualitative and quantitative data are considered carefully, it is possible to say that, considering the prep-class students and English language teachers participating in this research, all learners have their own learning styles and all teachers have their own teaching styles, which confirmed the first hypothesis of Reid (1995). The results showed that the students have a preference for a combination of teacher-centered and student-centered classrooms, as their responses to the survey and interviews show their tendency to see teachers both as the expert or the authority and as facilitator.

In terms of matching learning styles to teaching styles, the results show that a mismatch that could give rise to various issues as put forward by previous studies (e.g. Ehrman, 1996; Little-

wood, Liu, & Yu, 1996; Peacock, 2001; Oxford, Hollaway, & Horton-Murillo, 1992) is not observed when findings from the surveys and interviews are taken into consideration. Teachers and students participating in this research seem to be happy with their current situation except for a few cases. As proposed by Peacock (2001), teachers need to balance their teaching styles in order to avoid possible problems stemming from the mismatch between their teaching styles and students' learning styles. In this study, it has been found that teachers in general are aware of the fact that meeting the demands of all types of learners can be achieved by using various learning materials and activities despite the restrictions of the curriculum. This awareness displayed by the teachers may make great contributions in EFL classrooms, since Sabeh et al. (2011) suggests that respecting others' styles and responding to different styles by accommodating some strategies could help promote learning.

5 Limitations and suggestions

The present study was conducted with prep-class EFL students and their teachers using surveys and interviews. The survey findings could not be supported by data drawn from the observations in real classrooms. The observations in the real classrooms could enable a deeper understanding of the learning styles of students and the teaching styles of teachers, and whether there was a match or mismatch between them. Moreover, in the present study, a discrepancy was observed between the survey and the interview results from the student participants, which may result from the fact that survey items might direct student responses. Therefore, a further investigation with different data collection methods could contribute to a deeper understanding of what students think about how they learn better and why they think so. Besides, the data could be analysed by taking into consideration the variables of gender, department, and so forth.

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