

## **Investigating a potential difference between EFL teachers' teaching strategies and learners' learning styles**

**Tigabu Teshager<sup>1</sup>**

### **Abstract**

The present study was conducted to examine a possible difference between EFL teachers' teaching strategies and students' learning styles at Aferewanat Preparatory and Secondary School in South Gondar. Descriptive research design was mainly used to assess the teaching strategies of five EFL teachers and the learning styles of 170 grades 11 and 12 students. Simple random sampling was used to select the students, while availability sampling was employed for teachers. Data were collected through questionnaire, classroom observations and in-depth interview. Independent sample T-test and frequency counts were used to analyze the quantitative data. On the other hand, thematic narration and description of the respondents' ideas were used to analyse the qualitative data. The finding of the study showed that visual style was the learning style of the majority of students. In addition, note & lecture, pair work and group discussion were the most dominant teaching strategies used by teachers. Besides, there was no statistically significant difference between the teachers' visual and auditory-oriented teaching strategies and students' visual and auditory style categories. However, there was statistically significant difference between kinaesthetic type of teaching strategies and kinaesthetic learning styles. Hence, it's recommended that teachers should vary their teaching strategies in line with the visual, auditory and kinaesthetic (VAK) modalities in order to meet the learning styles of their students.

*Keywords:* difference, strategy, style, learning style and teaching strategy

### **INTRODUCTION**

The idea of individual learning styles is not novel. Long ago, Aristotle found individual variations in youngsters and observed that every child has distinctive abilities. Many personality theories and classifications for individual variations were developed within the early 1900s; these focused especially on the correlation between memory and visual or oral teaching methods. Because of the main focus on the intelligence quotient of the learner and academic achievement, study into learning styles then decreased. However, there has been a revived interest in learning styles study in the last half of the 1900s and lots of teachers are seeking to include the outcomes within the classroom (Boersma, 2008). During the past four decades, educational research has identified a number of factors that account for some of the differences in how students learn. One of the variables, styles of learning, has been generally described as "cognitive, affective, and physiological characteristics that are reasonably stable

---

<sup>1</sup> Gondar College of Teachers Education. Email: [tigabu2060@gmail.com](mailto:tigabu2060@gmail.com)

measures of how learners interpret, communicate with, and react to the learning environment" (Keefe, 1979, p.4). Besides, learning style is the term that denotes the difference in individuals the way they process information while learning (Jaleel and Thomas, 2019). The word learning style only started to appear in the 1970s in learning literature. One of the reasons for the term's emergence is the practical application of the learning style, particularly in education and training. Riding & Cheema (1991) indicates that it has arisen as a substitute term for cognitive style and that cognitive style is just part of the learning style of a person.

Moreover, Reid (1998) defines them as internally based characteristics, often not perceived or consciously used by learners, for the intake and comprehension of new information. The concept of learning styles has typically included three aspects: cognitive (the way an individual processes, stores, and retrieves information), affective (emotional and personality attributes like motivation), and physiological (an individual's preferred sensory modes—visual, auditory, /tactile) (Reiff, 1992).

**Learning Style Models:** The theory of learning styles is based on the premise that different people appear to interpret and process knowledge differently as a result of heredity, upbringing, and/or cultural context. Nowadays, there are about thirty different dimensions of learning styles which are recognized (Ehrman, 1996). To define learning style dimensions, a number of models have been developed. Among these are multiple intelligences, the preference for visual versus auditory learning, field independence versus field dependency, internal versus external types, and reflective versus impulsive, to name a few. Of these learning style dimensions and models the Sternberg's Learning Style, David Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory, Gardner Multiple Intelligence and Reid's Learning Style Inventory (the VAK) could also be mentioned. Thus, in an effort to provide a basis for research in learning styles, a brief overview of two of the most prominent learning style(s) dimensions by which the present study based up on have been discussed in detail below.

Gardner (1983) set up seven unique numerous intelligences that can be created over time. The first one is *verbal/ linguistic*, which refers to capacity with and affectability to verbal and composed words. The second style is *musical*, being affectability to beat, pitch, and tune. The third intelligence is *logical/ mathematical*, which refers to capacity to utilize numbers successfully and to reason well. The fourth one is *spatial/ visual*, being able to create, space, colour, line, and shape, while *bodily/ kinaesthetic* style refers to the ability to utilize the body to specific thoughts and reactions. The other modality is *interpersonal*, being capable to work with another for a common good. The last is *intrapersonal*, being capable to get it oneself, that is, one possess qualities and shortcomings.

Reid (1983) created six Perceptual Learning Style Preferences (PLSP surveys or the VAK) that enable foreign students studying in the United States to classify themselves among six groups of their preferred learning styles. The first is a *visual learner* that learns more effectively through the eyes (seeing). The second is an *auditory learner* that learns more effectively through the ears (hearing). The third is a *tactile learner* who learns more effectively through touch (hands-on). The fourth is also learners who learn best through complete body experience. The other type is *group learners* that learn more effectively through working with others, while an *individual learner* learns more effectively through working alone. Reid's (1988) large-scale study of nearly 1,300 students revealed, among other things, that learners from different cultural backgrounds often differ significantly in their choice of preferred learning styles.

Treating all sensory styles to correspond with the overall distribution of VAK preferences among the students is the most preferable way to provide new information. With regard to percentages, Clark (cited in Novotna, 2008) states that the 65% of population falls into the class of visual type, 30% of the population prefers auditory type, and solely 5% favour the kinaesthetic style. The study of the Socony-Vacuum company also displays that learners keep: 10 % through reading, 26% through hearing, 30% by seeing, 50 % by seeing and hearing, 70% of what they say, and 90% by doing what they say (in Felder-Silverman, 1988). As a result, teachers ought to bear in mind of this diversity and permit all students to participate within the lesson equally. In this study, the investigator wished to focus on physiological dimensions of learners' most well-liked sensory modes—visual, auditory, kinaesthetic/tactile—as mentioned by Fleming and Mills (1992a). The study used these VAK modes, customized by MoE (2002) to suit the Ethiopian EFL teaching-learning environment mainly based on the *Gardner Multiple Intelligence and Reid learning style models*.

Just as there are many learning styles, there are also identifiable strategies of teaching. This fact is no great revelation, since experts have recognized certain variations for centuries in the way teachers have approached their tasks. Concerned professionals are all aware of the systematic questioning of Socrates as well as the organized lecture method. Historically, emphasis has been placed on general strategies of teaching, for it was assumed that if one followed a recognized strategy of good teaching, all educable students would learn (Shaunessy, 2000).

Strategy is the process of carrying out a certain activity in a skilful way. It usually requires some sort of planning. People need probably to use strategy when faced with a new situation, that is, the strategy like to win a game. It is a plan of action designed to achieve an overall aim (Whalley, 2017). In education, the response is characteristic: to give the urge a name, and to begin the efforts to come together around the new name. The new name is teaching strategies. The name was borrowed from games theory. In chess, a strategy consists of a general plan for achieving the objective of checkmating one's opponent. The difficulty with the analogy is that in teaching we are not engaging an adversary.

We are trying to encourage growth in a number of domains which are taken together to add up to the human condition. Then, teaching strategies refer to the structure, teaching techniques, procedures and processes that a teacher uses during instruction. These are strategies the teacher employs to assist student learning. In other words, simply put, a teaching strategy is the way a teacher chooses to convey information and facilitate learning (Ayua, 2017).

***Types of Teaching Strategies:*** In light of mainly innovative teaching methods, Eherman & Oxford (1990), Cubero (2004) and Fayombo (2014) listed some teaching strategies including some of good ideas for structuring assignments and activities for students for actively engaging them and placing more responsibility on them for their own learning. In addition, the teaching strategies are applicable to courses at all levels accordingly. These are visual type of teaching strategies:

1. **Graphic organizer:** It is a way of using graphical organization of information like drawings, paintings, pictures, photographs, tables, diagrams, etc.
2. **Note & lecture:** This can also be an effective means of providing clarifying existing information to a large heterogeneous group in a reasonable period of time. This is useful for covering underlying concepts, principles, and systems.
3. **Demonstrations:** It is a strategy that involves performing an activity so that learners can observe it.
4. **Problem-solving:** This is the act of finding ways of dealing with problems, or it is a way by which students are encouraged to explore different strategies and processes to find the answer.
5. **Individual work:** It is a way by which each student is supposed to tackle an assignment by their own.
6. **Free writing:** It is a way by which each student is expected to write an essay or a piece of essay on topics of their interest. Additionally, the auditory-oriented strategies include jigsaw technique, effective group discussion, dialogue, debate & interview, story-telling, Socratic Method, and interactive oral lectures. The following are also kinaesthetic teaching strategies: role plays & simulations, dictation, project works, written lecture, language games and field experience. All these were used as teachers' questionnaires.

***Empirical evidence on learning styles and teaching strategies:*** Studies show that when there is a match between teaching strategies and learning styles, academic achievement, student attitudes, and student behaviour can be significantly enhanced (Mulu, 2011) and specifically in second and foreign language instructions (Wallace & Oxford, 1992). Learning style research has also indicated that students have higher academic success rates in learning environments that match their learning styles (Border & Chism, 1992). Students

whose learning styles are compatible with the teaching strategy of a course instructor tend to retain information longer, apply it more effectively, and have more positive post-course attitudes toward the subject than do their equivalent who experience learning/teaching style or strategy mismatches (Lage, 2000).

On the other hand, several studies have reported that if there is a mismatch between learners' learning styles and strategies of instruction or the curriculum, it can adversely affect foreign language achievement (Ehrman, 1996; Ehrman & Oxford, 1995; Felder & Henrique, 1995 & Berhanu, 2011). Similarly, Reid's (1987) study found that a mismatch between teaching styles and learning styles causes learning failure, frustration, and discouragement.

In practice, however, students have not been learning in line with their needs, particularly with their preferred learning styles. Even though the Ethiopian Education policy has intended to shift from the passive to the active ways of learning by means of employing diverse active learning and teaching strategies in to the classroom, many teachers are still using a single dominant teaching strategy, that is, oral lecture, which would only benefit more for auditory learners and leaving other types of learners like visual and kinaesthetic at disadvantage. For instance, a study conducted on three selected secondary schools in Dawro Zone by Mebratu and Woldemariam (2018) revealed that lecture (explanation) was the most dominant strategy used. In addition, the same result was reported from the study at Samara University by Anbessa (2012). The frequent use of oral lecture in schools and higher academic institutions was also asserted by Daniel (2004).

Nevertheless, the students have showed interest not to frequently be taught by this traditional method. To illustrate this, a study from Madawalabu University showed that trainees rated [oral] lecture as the least interesting among many teaching methods (Aynalem , Abebe , Guadie and Bires , 2015). What is more, the researcher carried out the students' preferences for the teachers' EFL teaching strategies at Aferewanat and Goh secondary and preparatory schools of South Gondar for two consecutive years respectively and found that oral lecture was the least preferred strategy in both schools (Tigabu, 2018 and 2019). Therefore, the teachers' reliance on the disfavoured method clearly shows that the students' learning styles have not been balanced with teaching strategies. Why is this maladjustment recurring?

There are different challenges that prevent teachers from matching teaching strategies to the students' learning styles. Various scholars have attributed this imbalance to the following identified issues of concern by secondary and higher education teachers. Among these is the dominance of lecture method. The lecture method has persisted as a common mode of instruction in high schools and colleges of further education and elsewhere (Daniel, 2004). The second is poor guidance and counselling services. Quite many secondary and higher education students need guidance and counselling services for successes in their education. For instance, student's background (family's educational

background, culture and environment) affects the teaching and learning process (Daniel, 2004). The third is lack of pedagogical training. Most teachers in secondary schools in the country have no enough training on teaching methodologies regularly, which may obligate teachers to teach only in the old fashion. That is why Charles (2010) cited in Agbowuro, et al (2019) reminds instructors that majority of teachers teach the way that they were taught which results in a very little level of thinking questions or concepts. The best method to increase the status of critical thinking in the classroom is by building up learners' capacity to critically digest the concepts and ideas talked about in class. To do so, teachers must be ready to try out various innovative techniques, strategies and methods, so schools and other concerned organs must be voluntary to equip teachers in the course of professional advancements and learning opportunities.

The other challenge is issues related to evaluation. Measurement and evaluation are one of the crucial elements in the entire teaching and learning process. Teaching and testing are inseparable. They are so closely linked that it is virtually impossible to work in either without being constantly concerned with the other (Heaton, in Tesfaye, 2009). Time could also be seen as a challenge. Regarding the issue of matching the strategies with learning needs, the challenge becomes providing enough time and employing instructional strategies so that all students can achieve the same level of teaching (Levine, 1985). Finally comes gender difference. Males and females learn differently from each other (Cavanaugh, 2002). Males tend to be more tactual and visual, and they need more mobility in a more informal environment than females.

Hence, to raise the recent commitments and improve the actual practice to go beyond individualized instruction as well as to maximise the students' English proficiency, there should be devotion to examine and re-examine teaching strategies and accommodations with students' learning styles. To this end, the researcher was determined to explore learning styles, teaching strategies and their potential differences at Aferewanat Preparatory and Secondary School in Dera District of Amhara Region.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Even though learning styles have obtained a great deal of positive emphasis in recent years, a few educational psychologists and cognitive scientists avoid the issue of learning styles (Denzine, 2005). Curry (1990) has recognized the overall limitations related with learning style theory in the following way: ambiguity in meaning of "styles"; flaws in reliability and validity of evaluating tools; over-generalized classification of features in students. In addition, while the literature does basically indicate that there is wide acceptance of the concept of learning styles and has long recognized the need for innovative instructional activities that relate to the diverse learning styles of learners, there is disagreement on how to best measure learning styles (Coffield, et al., 2004).



However, many scholars and researchers underlie the vitality of learning styles to the students and teachers. The proponents of learning style studies frequently claim that teachers should know their students' learning styles so as to adjust their teaching strategies accordingly. If the teaching strategy of the instructor never be adjusted to most of the learning styles of his or learners, the teacher needs to have adaptation in the way the material should be presented (Felder, 1993). According to Border and Chism (1992), the call for investigating the association between the teaching methods and students' learning styles is that learners get better academic achievement and enthusiasm in learning atmosphere where the teaching strategies go with their learning styles. Hence, this enables students to become efficient learners or to make them powerful through the most favorable teaching-learning circumstances.

In addition, Several studies indicated that matching teaching strategies with the students' needs, learning styles in particular, results for students in (1) positive attitudes towards the subject matter and even to their teacher, (2) motivational values, (3) skill development, (4) knowledge attainment and (5) higher academic achievement in the language (Border and Chism, 1992; Cassidy and Eachus, 2000). On the other hand, researchers and intellectuals such as Felder and Henrique's (1995) caution that when there are differences or mismatches between the learning styles of most students in a class and the teacher's teaching strategies, students may become (1) bored and inattentive in class, (2) do poorly on exams, (3) discourage themselves from the classes, the curriculum, and (4) even drop out of school in some cases.

As a result, realizing the paramount importance of matching the teaching strategies to the students' learning styles, it is mandatory to identify the learners' learning styles, teachers' teaching strategies and the possible difference between them so that the teacher can have sufficient ground to accommodate the strategies. First, although many studies about learning styles, teaching styles and the match between them had been conducted in Europe, America, and Asia, etc., for a long period of time (Oxford, 1990; Felder and Henrique, 1995), before the attention was already shifted to students' learning styles and teachers' teaching strategies (Merry, 2010; Fayombo, 214), the research on the mismatch or difference between teachers' teaching strategies (especially based on the three major teaching strategy categories as visual, auditory and kinaesthetic types) and students' learning styles (visual, Auditory and kinaesthetic modalities) has not been studied much globally, particularly in Ethiopian EFL context (Boersma, 2008). Second, the investigator could realize that even these previous research works were mostly carried out in Ethiopian universities, but few studies were conducted in Ethiopian preparatory and secondary schools (Mulu, 2011). Third, on the previous studies, the accommodation of learning styles of students with teaching styles (teaching strategies in some way) was usually determined by theoretical contexts, that is, depending on self-reporting of students' and/ or teachers' questionnaires and/ or interviews (Meskerem, 2014), but the current study typically utilized practical

or actual classroom observation of EFL classes as a complement to realize the potential difference or mismatch between the EFL VAK type of teaching strategies with the students' VAK learning style preferences.

### **OBJECTIVES**

1. Identify the preferred English language learning styles of preparatory school students.
2. Investigate the dominant teaching strategies of English language preparatory school teachers.
3. Examine if there are any potential significant differences between the VAK-oriented teaching strategies and VAK learning style categories of students.
4. Find out possible challenges of matching teaching strategies to learning styles across English language skills.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Design of the Study**

A mixed research approach was employed for this research work in the hope that it can help in giving complete set of information on the issue. In particular, a descriptive research design was used to assess the teaching strategies of teachers and learning styles of students. Quantitative method dealt with respondents' data collected through the questionnaires and observation checklists, while the qualitative method was used to describe and narrate the interview data.

### **Participants**

Out of 550 grades 11 and 12 students, 170 students (31%), males 109 (64%) and females 61 (36%), and the 5 English language teachers (4 males and 1female) were selected as participants of the study. Aferewanat Preparatory and Secondary School was selected out of three preparatory and secondary schools of Dera District on a random basis and so were the student participants, yet the teachers were selected on an availability sampling technique.

### **Instruments and Procedures**

Questionnaires, in-depth interviews and classroom observations were the main data gathering tools in this study.

### **Questionnaires**

Questionnaires were used to collect relevant information from participants of preparatory English language teachers and students. *The questionnaires for assessing students' learning styles* were the VAK learning styles inventories, with modifications suggested by Ethiopian directors at the Ministry of



Education, specifically to be used in the Ethiopian English language context (MoE, 2002). 36 questionnaire items, with three sets of 12 statements on each of the three learning style preference categories (12 statements grouped under each of the VAK) on a five Likert scale: never, rarely, sometimes, often and always, were translated into Amharic version and then distributed to 170 learners. All or 170 respondents could complete and return the questionnaires with some items jumped, but filled out by the investigator by taking the average of the completed items to avoid the missing data. In other words, if a student did not tick one or more of the 36 statements, then the mean of the whole responses could be filled in those jumped items.

*The Teaching strategy questionnaires* were organized by the investigator based on several lists of teaching strategies from Eherman & Oxford (1990), Banner (in Novotna, 2008), Cubero (2004) and Fayombo (2014). The inventory had 18 teaching strategies having three main categories (six strategies grouped under each of VAK-oriented strategies) based on a five Likert scale: never, rarely, sometimes, often and always. These were delivered to five English teachers and all were completed and returned at some time later.

### **In-Depth Interview**

In-depth interview was employed for three purposefully selected experienced English language teachers with whom the investigator had one extended and deep interview session with each other. *The interview guide for teachers* were some slightly adapted and some partly designed by the investigator from earlier researchers such as Tesfaye (2009) and Meskerem (2014). Questions regarding the teachers' teaching strategies, the attempt to matching strategies and styles, and possible challenges were organized by the investigator himself, while others concerning students' learning styles, students' contact with teachers and teachers' assistance to students were adapted from Tesfaye and Meskerem. The guide had six major questions that were helpful to hold insightful discussion with participant teachers lasting about an hour.

### **Observation checklist**

In order to assess the actual classroom practice and the relationship between the teaching strategies and learning styles of preparatory school English language teachers and students, the investigator used observation checklists designed by the investigator based on the suggestions for the classroom activities of teachers and students forwarded by Eherman & Oxford (1990). Four voluntary English teachers' classrooms were observed after clarifying the objective of the classroom observation and getting their full consents. Each teacher's classroom was observed for two periods. Four sessions were videoed for the sake of crosschecking the classroom ratings. Generally, eight observation sessions were carried out to complement compare with the questionnaire data. The observation checklist was prepared with a three point scale (yes, somehow, and no) with three sections: learning styles, teaching strategies and the relationship between the two to identify the presence or absence of some selected student-teacher

activities and to ensure the consistency of teaching strategies and learning styles.

### Data Analysis Techniques and Procedures

The data were analyzed pertaining to the study questions. The quantitative data obtained from the respondents through questionnaires (but observation checklists were manually calculated) were organized by computer software called Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 20. Accordingly, 36 learning style inventories were grouped and transformed into three, 12 items for each, as visual, auditory and kinaesthetic. The 12 items were also divided by 12 to get the grand mean of each learning style category. Similar procedure was followed to transform the 18 teaching strategies into three major VAK-oriented teaching strategies. Besides, descriptive statistics were used to analyze the major learning styles and teaching strategies. Moreover, to examine the possible difference between learning styles and teaching strategy categories an Independent sample T-test was used. Finally, the qualitative data obtained from this tool was thematically described and analyzed. Based on the analysis and interpretation of the data, research findings and conclusion were drawn and recommendations were made.

## PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

### The Dominant Learning Styles of Grades 11 & 12 Students

The following data shows the first research question regarding the preferred learning styles of preparatory school students.

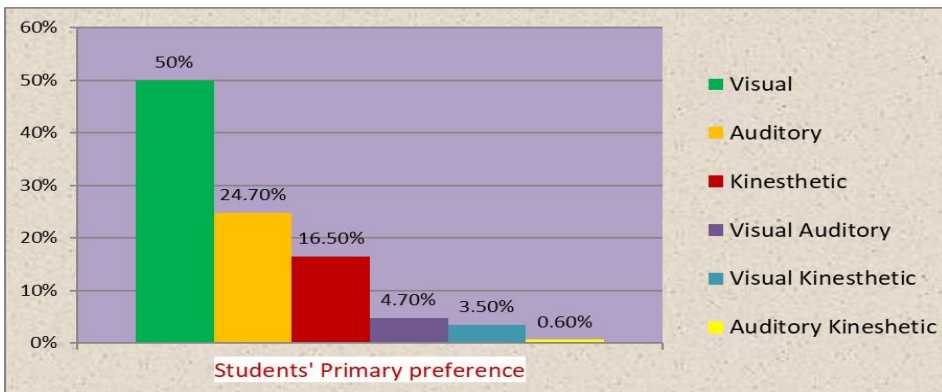
Table 1: Students' Primary Preferences in percentages in descending order (N=170)

No.	Types of Learning styles	Frequency & Percentage	Students' Primary preference	Students' primary preference rank	Bi-modal preference types	Frequency & percentage	score	Rank
1	Visual	Freq.	85	1	Visual-Auditory	Freq.	8	1
		%	50			%	4.7	
2	Auditory	Freq.	42	2	Visual-Kinaesthetic	Freq.	6	2
		%	24.7			%	3.5	
3	Kinaesth	Freq.	28		Auditory	Freq.	1	

	etic	%	16.5	3	- Kinaesth etic	%	0.6	3
--	------	---	------	---	-----------------------	---	-----	---

The current study found totally six types of physiological or sensory dimension learning style learners whose primary preferences were visual (50%), auditory (24.7%), (16.5%) and *bimodal* (8.8%) : visual-auditory (4.7%), visual-kinaesthetic (3.5%), and auditory-kinaesthetic (0.6%) styles respectively. This shows that students have various favoured learning modalities to learn best; some of them can also benefit dually and equally from those styles.

**Figure 1: Students' primary VAK learning style preferences in percentages**



As it can be inferred from the finding above, exactly half of the students preferred that visual learning style, which was the most dominant of all. Almost 25% of them chose auditory learning style, while 16.5% of students made kinaesthetic learning styles and the bimodal ones (8.8%) as their first preferences. Thus, this signals that many of the students had the strongest preferences for visual although it was not weak for other styles.

**Table 2: Summary of the grand mean of the students' three major learning style categories**

Descriptive Statistics							
VAK Modalities	N	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Grand Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
Visual Learning styles	170	2.08	4.67	548.00	3.2235	.47214	1
Auditory Learning styles	170	1.58	4.58	515.08	3.0299	.49914	2

Kinaesthetic Learning styles	170	1.75	4.67	494.08	2.9064	.55018	3
Valid N (list wise)	170						

Key: Never=1-1.80; Rarely=1.81-2.60; Sometimes=2.61-3.40; Often=3.41-4.20; Always=4.21- 5

As shown in Table 2, the most preferred way of learning by most of the students was visual learning style (Mean=3.22) followed by auditory (Mean=3.03) and Kinaesthetic (Mean=2.91) learning modes. Thus, it is possible to claim that majority of the students *sometimes* used all the above learning modes and took advantage of them largely to learn English language skills. For that matter, the approximation of the means of the three learning styles was good evidence. In addition, the very slight differences of the standard deviations among the VAK modalities show that the scores of the items are near to the mean of all styles.

### The Dominant Teaching Strategies of EFL Teachers

The following data show the second research question concerning the major teaching strategies of EFL preparatory school teachers.

#### Grand means of major types of teaching strategies (Number of teachers=5)

Table 3: Grand means of EFL teaching strategies

Descriptive Statistics							
VAK-Oriented Teaching Strategies	N	Minimum	Maximum	sum	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation	Rank
visual Strategies	5	2.67	3.67	15.50	3.1000	.36515	1
Auditory Strategies	5	2.50	3.33	15.50	3.1000	.36515	1
Kinaesthetic Strategies	5	2.17	3.00	12.33	2.4667	.34157	3
Valid N (list wise)	5						

Key: Never=1-1.80; Rarely=1.81-2.60; Sometimes=2.61-3.40; Often=3.41-4.20; Always=4.21- 5

As can be seen from the preceding table, both visual type of teaching strategies, M=3.10, (like Note and Lecture, Individual Work and Demonstrations) and auditory type of strategies, M=3.10, (including Pair Work & Group Discussion, and Socratic Method) were equally the most commonly utilized strategies which

were *sometimes* used in the EFL classes by the teachers. However, the kinaesthetic type of teaching strategies,  $M=2.4667$ , (written lectures, project works and interactive language games) were under the ideal mean ( $M=3$ ), which means that these were *rarely* used in EFL classes. Here it is possible to notice that though teachers made some attempts to use both the visual and auditory type teaching strategies in the class, the efforts exerted on those strategies particularly in employing kinaesthetic type of strategies was somehow weak. On the other hand, the absence of high dominance of one type of strategies over the other indicates that teachers managed to balance or vary their teaching strategies to keep in touch with the students' varied learning styles.

### The most and the least dominant teaching strategies and their Classifications as employed by the teachers (N=5)

Table 4: The most and the least common teaching strategies

No.	Teaching strategies	Mean	Rank	Types of strategy
1	Note and lecture	4.40	1	Visual
2	Pair work & group discussion	4.40	1	Auditory
3	Socratic Method	4.20	3	Auditory
4	Written lecture	3.80	4	Kinaesthetic
5	Problem solving	3.80	4	Visual
6	Role plays and simulations	1.8	Almost <i>never or the least</i> used	Kinaesthetic
7	Field experience	1.00	<i>Never</i> used	Kinaesthetic

Key: Never=1-1.80; Rarely=1.81-2.60; Sometimes=2.61-3.40; Often=3.41-4.20; Always=4.21- 5

From Table 4, it is evident that most of the teachers *always* taught their students most commonly using note & lecture, which is visual oriented (Mean=4.40). Likewise, pair work & group discussion, which are auditory oriented teaching strategies (Mean=4.40). The other dominantly used teaching strategies were Socratic Method ( $M=4.20$ ), written lecture ( $M=3.80$ ), and problem solving (3.80) were *often* employed by the teachers. On the contrary, role plays and simulations ( $M=1.80$ ), and field experience ( $M=1.0$ ) were the last, the least, and never used strategies by the teachers in their teaching and learning practices. Based on this result, one may understand that teachers used teaching strategies with great variations, reaching up to totally ignoring few, but vital strategies.

### The comparison between Teachers' (N=5) Teaching Strategies and Students' (N=170) Learning Styles

Table 5: Descriptive statistics for learning styles and teaching strategies

Group Statistics					
Groups		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Visual	Learning Styles	170	3.2235	.47214	.03621
	Teaching Strategies	5	3.1000	.36515	.16330
Auditory	Learning Styles	170	3.0299	.49914	.03828
	Teaching Strategies	5	3.1000	.36515	.16330
Kinaesthetic	Learning Styles	170	2.9064	.55018	.04220
	Teaching Strategies	5	2.4667	.34157	.15275

Key: Never=1-1.80; Rarely=1.81-2.60; Sometimes=2.61-3.40; Often=3.41-4.20; Always=4.21- 5

This table again shows that the mean scores of the students' learning styles and teaching strategies were very approximate, that is, the EFL VAK learning styles were *sometimes* preferred by most students, and the teaching strategies were *sometimes* used by the EFL teachers (Mean=2.9064-3.2235) except for kinaesthetic-oriented strategies (Mean=2.4667), which were *rarely* employed in the English classroom. This mean score approximation generally shows that teachers teach in equivalent degree of preferences of their students. Also, these data signal that there were no extreme dominance between and among the groups of teachers and students.

Table 6: Independent sample T-test analysis between students' EFL learning styles and teachers' teaching strategies

Teaching Strategies & Learning Styles Categories		T-Test for Equality of Means			
		T	Df	Sig.(2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Visual	Equal variances	.579	173	.563	.12353

	assumed				
Auditory	Equal variances assumed	-.311	173	.756	-.07010
Kinaesthetic	Equal variances assumed	1.774	173	.078*	.43971

\* The mean difference is significant at 0.1 level.

Regarding the visual, auditory and kinaesthetic categories, the data in Table 6 show that the calculated Ts (.579, -.311, 1.774) were less than the critical T (1.984) at p. value < .05 significance level at 2-tailed with 173 degree of freedom. In this regard, there was no significant difference between EFL teachers' visual-oriented teaching strategies and learners' visual learning styles. The auditory type of teaching strategies and the auditory learning styles were also consistent as in between the kinaesthetic groups. This seems that most of the teaching strategies tend to be consistent or congruent with the students' learning preferences.

By contrast, the kinaesthetic type of teaching strategies alone had a fairly significant difference from the students' kinaesthetic learning styles as the calculated T (1.774) was greater than the critical T (1.660) at p. value < 0.1 significance level at 2-tailed with 173 degree of freedom. This reveals that this teaching strategy type seems to have relatively meaningful mismatch with the students' kinaesthetic learning preferences. That is to mean, there was a major problem in implementing this teaching strategy in to the classroom. To substantiate these data, classroom observations were held, and the results have been presented next.

**The data obtained from classroom observations between the teaching strategies and learning styles of students (Observation Sessions=8) in line with VAK learning modalities.**

Table 7: The data obtained from observation about visual learning styles of the students

No.	Activities related to students' visual learning styles	Score	Rating Scales		
			Yes	Somehow	No
1	Students prefer information written on the board.	session	5	2	1
		percentage	62.5	25	12.5
2	Students need to see the teacher in class in order to keep their attentions focused.	session	3	5	-
		percentage	37.5	62.5	-



Total	session	4	3.5	0.5
	percentage	50	43.75	6.25

As in this table, in 50% of the sessions on average, the investigator was able to observe that most of the students preferred information written on the board. They could also maintain strong eye contact with their teacher in order to keep their attentions focused. He could also notice that averagely in 43.75% of the sessions, the learners were interested in items four and five somehow, while few other students did not show any interest on these items (6.25% of the sessions). Hence, visual learning style seemed to be the greatest preference of students as almost all of them engaged actively in visual activities.

Table 8: The data obtained from observation about auditory learning styles of the students

No.	Activities related to students' auditory learning styles	Score	Rating Scales		
			Yes	Somehow	No
3	Students enjoy group discussion.	session	3	4	1
		percentage	37.5	50	12.5
4	The students participate in the class actively in oral question and answer.	session	3	3	2
		percentage	37.5	37.5	25
Total		session	3	3.5	1.5
		percentage	37.5	43.75	18.75

Regarding the investigator's observation, in 37.5% of the sessions the students were highly interested in auditory activities like participating in group discussions, talking to friends and taking part actively in oral questions and answer. On the other hand, others (in 43.75% of the sessions) tended to show interest for those activities in some way. However, in 18.75% of the sessions, the students were totally passive in the items 6 and 7. In fact, students could show greatest interest to the auditory activities next to the visual one.

Table 9: The data obtained from observation about kinaesthetic learning styles of the students

No.	Activities related to students' kinaesthetic learning styles	Score	Rating Scales		
			Yes	Somehow	No
5	Students enjoy taking notes from	Session	3	3	2

	the chalkboard.	Percentage	37.5	37.5	25
6	The students involve in project works and language games.	Session	1	3	4
		Percentage	12.5	37.5	50
Total		Session	2	3	3
		Percentage	25	37.5	37.5

It is possible here to notice that in 25% of the sessions on average, the students enjoyed taking notes from the black board. Also, they involved in project works and some language games like word search puzzles. Besides, in 37.5% of the sessions, many students engaged in those activities in some way, whereas some other students were unlikely to show interest for those activities at all. As a result, the kinaesthetic learning style appeared to be the least favored style by them.

Table 10: The data obtained from observation about teaching strategies of the teachers

No.	Activities related to teacher's teaching strategies	Score	Rating Scales		
			Yes	Somehow	No
7	The teacher applies a range of visual strategies and activities such as illustrations, free writing, note and lecture, individual work, demonstrations, etc. for students in the class.	Session	4	2	2
		Percentage	50	25	25
8	The teacher has auditory strategies and activities like oral questions, lectures, verbal explanations, discussions, story- telling, debates, dialogues, etc. in the class.	Session	3	4	1
		Percentage	37.5	50	12.5
9	The teacher uses kinaesthetic and tactile strategies and exercises like role plays, simulations, jigsaw puzzle, dictation or note taking, etc. in the class.	Session	2	3	3
		Percentage	25	37.5	37.5

As in Table 10, the teachers managed to employ most dominantly visual strategies and activities (in 50% of the sessions) such as illustrations, note and lecture, individual work and demonstrations for students followed by auditory (in 37.5% of the sessions) and kinaesthetic (in 25% of the sessions) strategies and activities. On the other hand, auditory activities (in 50% of the sessions)

were more frequently given to students somehow or to some extent, than kinaesthetic (in 37.5% of the sessions) and visual (in 25% of the sessions) activities. In addition, of all strategies, the kinaesthetic type of teaching strategy was the least used one as compared to both types of strategies which are visual type (in 25% of the sessions) and auditory type (in 12.5% of the sessions).

Table 11: The data obtained from the observation to see the adjustment of the teaching strategies to the learning styles

No.	Activities related to the match or mismatch of teaching strategies with learning styles	Score	Responses		
			No	Somehow	Yes
10	The teacher is able to adjust his/her teaching strategies with the learner's learning styles by varying the teaching strategies (oral lecture, small group discussion, individual work, written lecture, games, etc.) per VAK learning modes.	Session	2	3	3
		percentage	25	37.5	37.5

*Notes:* \* **No**= single strategy used; \* **somehow**: two strategies used; \* **Yes**: three or more strategies used

Regarding the adjustment between the strategies with the students needs, in three (37.5%) of the EFL classroom observations, several teachers were able to apply three or more teaching strategies by considering their students' VAK ways of learning. This was meant that all the visual, auditory and kinaesthetic learners could take advantage of the lesson equally. For this reason, these teachers varied their strategies like oral lecture, group discussion, and individual work. In other three (37.5%) sessions, some teachers made an attempt to accommodate their strategies with students' learning styles in some way by using two strategies that can benefit for two groups of students with preferred modes of learning. But in the two observations (25%), a quarter of the whole sessions, when the teachers employed only one teaching strategy throughout the period, there was apparent mismatch or difference between the strategies of teachers and learning styles of students with regard to the three types of learners in every class are concerned. In principle, a balanced instruction is mandatory, yet in practice it was common to observe the overall period covered by a single teaching strategy putting at least 66% of the students at a disadvantage. However, based on these general observations, it is possible to claim that there were no discrepancies between the strategies and the students' needs in most of the teaching and learning processes.

*Summary of data obtained from teachers' interviews regarding teaching strategies and learning styles and the accommodation of the two (N=3)*

At first, the teacher interviewees were asked what EFL teaching strategies they frequently used in the class. The first respondent (T1) said that he mostly used the traditional teaching approach -teacher-centered method- including strategies like oral lectures and even note and lecture. As to him, he used lecture method because of shortage of time to cover the vast portions of the text book. He added that he sometimes used the student-centered types of strategies such as demonstrations and role plays. Likewise, the second respondent (T2) mainly used written lecture or note and lecture teaching strategies followed by student centered and auditory type of strategies: pair work & group discussion, and question & answer. Unlike others, the third interviewee dominantly used active learning types of strategies such as Socratic Method and group discussion followed by note and lecture, which is teacher-centered and visual type of strategy. To sum up, two of the respondents said that they typically used the visual types of teaching strategies, while the third utilized auditory-oriented strategy. The kinaesthetic one was rarely used by all. The responses of all respondents to the questions whether they believed that their students had different learning styles were the same-yes. Also, they were inquired about another related question, that was, what learning styles their learners mostly preferred to use. All the teachers responded that most of the students tended to be visual.

The fourth basic question was about how often the teachers attempted to match their teaching strategies to the students' learning styles. With regard to this, two of them (T1 and T3) agreed that they felt they sometimes matched their strategies to their students' preferred ways of learning. Fortunately, the other teacher (T2) claimed that he almost always taught students in line with their learning needs. He also confirmed to the investigator that when he found most of his students in an uncomfortable mood to the daily lesson, he could change his way of presentation or teaching strategies and could teach them in a newly planned fashion the following day.

The fifth vital question forwarded was how they assisted their students to use their own preferred learning styles. Regarding this, all interviewees were able to help their learners in the following manners. For visual learners, they let students bring their textbooks and gave them reading tasks to read and write about certain issue. They also wrote notes on the blackboard, explained or lectured the notes. In addition, the students were provided with visual materials like pictures, diagrams or photos. Plus to these, they suggested students that they should read other helpful reference books. For auditory learners, they provided different questions that could be discussed either in pair or in groups. Then, they let them share their ideas and reflect first to their groups and then to the whole class.

What is more, the teachers presented lessons in the form of oral and interactive lectures followed by Socratic Method or question and answer, for example, at the start of the lesson to revise the previous lesson, and at the end of the lesson to summarize the lesson and to evaluate the learners. Moreover, they either

prepared or brought ready-made listening scripts and asked them to answer the questions from the script. In such and other ways, like classroom conversations, the respondents tried to boost their students' learning appetite. For the kinaesthetic ones, the interviewees agreed that the presentation of the lesson for those students was not as much and frequent as for the others. Therefore, to some extent, they allowed the students to move from their desks to the other to discuss with groups and share experiences. Besides, for tactile students, the teachers dictated them some notes. This was because some students were fond of writing orally, not from the black board. And some others were interested in writing from the board and in drawing pictures. Still others were interested in doing project works and playing games. As a result, the teachers should have considered some of these varieties of interests, yet they let them exercise in a very limited manner.

Furthermore, the respondents' responses about what they could do for a student who did not want to discuss in a group, but sat alone was almost the same that they asked the student's problems and advised him/her to join other groups to share experiences. Even when the student continued being alone, they repeatedly motivated and tried to convince them instead of assigning individual tasks with respect to their learning preferences. One of the respondents (T2) said that if the student did not tell him the problem, he would ask him another friend of him/her, 'why?'

Hence, this it is apparent that although all teachers attempted to ask those students' problems and to motivate them to share experiences was good, the student's preferred way of learning, working individually as a visual learner, was not well maintained. Hence, the respondents did not seem fully aware of the learning needs of their students and even the very nature of their EFL teaching strategies. Due to this, they had made too many attempts to help them only work together with others. This was evident by the responses from the questions that were 'if you understand that a student is an individual learner, a learner who works better when working alone, what can you do with them?'

Another example of experience the interviewer heard from the second respondent was that he always found a student who did not write anything from the board. Recognizing this, one day he asked the student why he did not write any. Then, the students replied that he did not have any kind of interest in writing notes from the blackboard even in all other subjects. Rather, he was interested in listening to the lectures very well and in attending the teacher actively while he was teaching. From that time on wards, the teacher allowed him to do everything useful other than writing notes from the board while he was writing. Hence, one can believe that the student was an audio learner. At that time, the teacher was able to understand the preference of the student. But till then, something more than that was expected to be done by the teacher in involving the student in other lovable activities so as to motivate him, which might be by providing auditory activities with other similarly interested friends.

The other question was as regards the students' free contact with their teachers to get professional assistance to employ their learners' learning styles. As to the respondents, some students mostly contacted their teachers for some reasons. First, they did this when they wanted to get more clarification of the lesson in and out of the class. Second, the students asked questions teachers to direct them to helpful reference books. Again, they did so when they came across vague questions and concepts from guide books. Last, their contact was due to the need to receive pieces of advice on how to improve their English. But this was not purely on how to use their learning styles as they might not have clear understanding of their modes of learning.

On the contrary, most of the students, low achievers, as to the respondents, hesitated or were afraid to contact teachers. The reasons could be (1) most of them were from the rural areas with lots of shy and poor background of free exchange of ideas with teachers; (2) their pessimistic attitude towards the language made them hopeless and sat their legs layered and their hands fastened. They even claimed that they have not still got the 'heart' of English language, so they did not expect that they would be as effectively as they could be in other subjects.

#### *Major challenges in matching students' learning styles with teachers' teaching strategies in an EFL class*

Being interviewed, grades 11 and 12 teachers pinpointed the following major challenges that appeared in the forefront in matching their teaching strategies to their learners' different learning styles. The first and foremost influential challenge was teachers' lack of awareness of their students, learning style preferences and even the nature of their teaching strategies. To illustrate this, most of the teachers lacked sufficient knowledge of their students' learning needs. Although most of the teachers knew as a whole that most of the students were visual learners, they did not realize specifically which students mainly favor visual, auditory or kinaesthetic types of learning styles. Consequently, if they did not realize the learners' best way of learning properly, it was not contextual that they would accommodate their teaching strategies to the students' learning modes. Otherwise, instead of teaching students, it might be telling them certain information that would be lost even in the short memory of the learners right away.

The other problem of matching lessons with students' needs was the lack of cognition of all the nature of teaching strategies from the side of teachers. Teachers should always be well aware of the strategies which they must use so frequently in the classroom. Thus, they should have known which types teaching strategies could address the needs of visual learners; which ones were best for auditory and kinaesthetic learners. For example, a Socratic Method is mainly comfortable to an auditory learner, so if the teacher uses this strategy alone in a period, all other students with styles other than this will be at a disadvantage.

The other basic challenge was mixed type of style preferences of students. The diversified nature of students' learning styles and in general the presence of individual difference among learners was one of the greatest threats to compromise the teaching with the learning contexts. If the learners were exclusively one type of learner, say, visual, it was easy for the teacher to present in accordance with the needs of only those students provided that the teacher was again aware of those students' modes. Surprisingly, even those who knew their students well sometimes failed to meet the needs of their students because it might be a tiresome work and time consuming. Or else, the lesson prepared for one type of students is meaningless for others and vice versa. Then, the teacher will continue satisfying the educational thirst of the few. As a result, the needs of the many will not be addressed at all and at any time unless he /she is the 'mediator' of the styles of all students by means of adapting different strategies for groups of students in each period of the day.

Next comes time constraints and vastness of the text book. With regard to this, the respondents explained that it had been so difficult and time consuming to use two or more teaching strategies and to address the different learning styles of students within the a 40 minute period. Also, since the number of pages of the text book in both grade levels is above 300, the teacher should cover at least 2 pages per a day. Therefore, with such a speed of teaching, how could a teacher adjust different teaching methods with different learning preferences of students? Besides, in spite of his/or tolerance for these challenges, the teacher was also burdened by the nature of content of the course as it did not sometimes give equal rooms for all students. For instance, when the daily lesson was about a certain reading passage, mainly visual learners were able to involve in that activity, whereas most others were most likely to take passive roles, especially as long as the reading text was to be read silently and long enough for a period.

The other considerable challenge, as it seemed to these interviewees, was large class size. As far as it is considered, these teachers argued that in classes where there were about 70 students like some classes in grade 11 and about 50 students in grade 12 classes, managing and supporting students by keeping in touch the teaching strategies with the students' learning preferences in a single or two periods was really difficult to imagine. It was also cumbersome to move around, to visit them and to intervene in their activities. For that matter, students have had no direct and frequent exposure to their classmates and teachers. As a result, it is worth saying that the larger the class size, the more time teachers need and the more unlikely to match the strategies with learning styles.

There was still another problem that both teachers and students encountered in the attempt to match the lessons. That was long experience of teachers and learners with the traditional method of teaching. Regarding teachers, they were often prone to use and had great tendency to employ the traditional method of teaching, sometimes by forgetting what they have already known and have



already learnt, and sometimes by teaching simply in the way they were taught, but not in the way the students wanted to learn.

## DISCUSSION

With respect to the finding of the current study, a great majority of Aferewanat Preparatory School EFL learners had fairly greatest preferences for a visual modality, which was similar to the finding of Berhanu's (2011) study at grades 10-12 in Oromia Region. In the present study, for example, it was found out that the students learned best when their teacher gave them handouts, or wrote the information on the chalkboard, when they made lists and took lots of notes to remember things better, when they saw the teacher in the class to keep their attention focused, when they wrote down instructions to a project to remember them and when they paid a lot of attention to pictures, tables, figures, diagrams, etc. This was also noted by Fleming (2001).

On the other hand, the auditory modality was the second greatest preference of students. These auditory learners confirmed that they could learn best by discussing or talking about new procedures, by talking about the subject in class, by repeating things again to remember them more easily, by listening to a radio program to get new information and by talking to themselves or classmates when solving a problem or writing. In addition, these learners liked to explain new ideas to others, attend lectures, and discuss topics with other students and their teachers as similarly discussed by Fleming (2001).

The least learning modality (but still chosen by many of the students) is kinaesthetic. The analysis of the questionnaire showed that these students obtained more information through actually demonstrating new procedures or techniques, when they are given a project to learn about extra information, by trying to think of an action that matches the text when reading a textbook, by taking notes though they do not go back to them and by walking with a friend while speaking English as also asserted by Fleming (2001).

Besides, the results obtained from the students' questionnaires (N=170) showed that 50% of the students were primarily visual learners, 24.7% were auditory learners and 16.5% of them were kinaesthetic ones. This study also found three other bimodal type learners whose primary preferences were visual-auditory (4.7%), visual-kinaesthetic (3.5%), and auditory-kinaesthetic (0.6%) styles, which was consistent in number of types and order with the study of Fayombo (2014). Hence, according to this scholar and authors like (Ballinger & Ballinger, 1982), these types of bimodal learners were luckier and more advantageous in acquiring knowledge and developing English language skills, in learning motivation, attentiveness, and language achievements than other mono-modal learners. For this reason, the teacher needs to be cautious for these varieties in advance before running a language class.

Besides, among the overall mean of the learning styles of students, the mean of the visual (M=3.22) was the largest of all. The auditory (M=3.03) and the

kinaesthetic ( $M=2.91$ ) modalities also come next in the order. The approximation of the means of the three learning modalities indicates that almost all the students took advantage of all the learning styles largely for learning English language skills. In other words, it is evident that these students seemed to have mixed style preferences, unlike the analysis of variance within the students' learning styles, similar to previous findings (Reid, 1987 and Willing, 1993). Thus, teachers should be aware of the possibility of this diversity and allow students to participate in the class equally although top priority for visual learners should usually be given.

The findings of this study was also fairly consistent with those of Clark (cited in Novotna, 2008) who states that 65% of the population preferred the visual type, 30% of the population had strong preference for auditory type and only about 5% preferred the kinaesthetic style. On the contrary, the studies conducted by Boersma (2008) and Muluken (cited in Mulu, 2011) at Bahir Dar University found that the students had strongest preference for auditory learning although their preferences for visual and kinaesthetic learning styles were not totally weak. The cause of the difference in the results of the three studies was attributed to the levels participants enrolled in these studies. Muluken and Boersma' participants were students who learnt English as their major field of study. Whereas, the participants in the present study were students who were learning English as a subject in the preparatory school. Further, the way learning is structured in a preparatory and university levels is different. For example, in a university instruction is mainly presented through oral lecture method for students who usually study independently outside the classroom. Yet, students in a preparatory school need teachers to help them every basic activity, to present them reading materials, to provide them enough notes to be written on the chalkboard with explanations, etc. The other possibility may be that since students want to be ready for entrance exams which are paper and pencil-oriented, they must be dependent on reading and writing activities in and out of the classroom, which are more of visual activities.

On the same vein, all the teacher interviewees agreed that most of the students were visual learners, some of them were auditory and some others were kinaesthetic learners. This result is in line with the investigator's observation in the actual classrooms where in 50% of the sessions, students showed greatest interests for visual activities such as writing notes from the board and maintain continuous eye contact with their teacher so as to keep their attentions focused, where as in 37.5% of the sessions the students showed good interests for auditory activities like working in group discussions and participating actively in oral question and answer. However, students were involved somehow, in 25% sessions, in kinaesthetic activities including taking notes from the blackboard and taking part in word search puzzles.

As far as the visual type of teachers' teaching strategies were concerned, note and lecture ( $M=4.4$ ) was the strategy which was *always* used by EFL teachers

followed by problem solving ( $m=3.8$ ), individual work ( $M=3.6$ ) and demonstrations ( $M=3.2$ ), whereas free writing ( $M=2.4$ ) and graphic organizer ( $M=2$ ) were used to some extent in the classroom. This indicates that most of the visual teaching strategies were applicable in the teaching and learning process. Similarly, a study conducted by Anbessa (2014) as cited in Meskerem (2014) at Samara University found that individualized and demonstration methods were employed as third and fourth as replied by the student respondents. Concerning auditory type of teaching strategies, pair work & group discussion ( $M=4.4$ ) were the leading strategies followed by Socratic Method ( $M=4.2$ ) and oral lectures ( $M=3.4$ ). The other strategies that were *rarely* used by the teachers were dialogue, debate & interview ( $M=2.6$ ). These teachers had also little experience with jigsaw technique ( $M=2.4$ ) and story- telling ( $M=2$ ).

Thus, one can understand that teachers used just half of the auditory type strategies in a good manner. This finding is also in line with Anbessa (2014) who found that lecture method (oral and written lectures) and discussion method as the first and second dominant methods were used in the class respectively. Regarding kinaesthetic type of teaching strategies, teachers employed written lecture ( $M=3.8$ ) and project works ( $M=3.2$ ) in a good frequency. Never the less, interactive language games and dictation were rarely used, while, unfortunately, role-plays & simulations, and field experiences were almost never applied in the EFL classroom. This indicates that the kinaesthetic type of teaching strategy was at the bottom most with respect to the teachers' practice of teaching.

When the most and the least used teaching strategies of the teachers were compared and contrasted, it was revealed that the most frequently applied types of strategies were visual such as note & lecture, and Problem solving, which was followed by auditory type that includes pair work & group discussion, and Socratic Method. Nonetheless, the kinaesthetic type that includes role-plays & simulations, and field experience was the least or never used strategy by teachers. From these results, it is clear that both visual and auditory types of strategies were evenly used by teachers in the class. However, the kinaesthetic type of strategy was normally liable to be undermined.

Moreover, the grand means of the three major types of teaching strategies as reportedly applied by the teachers were compared. The dominant or major types of strategies were the visual and auditory types of strategies. The last commonly used type of strategy was the kinaesthetic type. Here it is obvious that visual and auditory major types of strategies were almost equally employed in the class. Yet, the kinaesthetic type was not used as frequently as others used in the class. However, these findings slightly disagree with the result of the classroom observation. To illustrate, in exactly 50% of the sessions, the teachers were able to utilize visual teaching strategies and activities like illustrations, note and lecture, individual work and demonstrations. Also, in 37.5% of the sessions, auditory strategies and activities like oral question and answer, oral lectures and group discussions were used as a second stage and kinaesthetic strategies and

activities (25%) such as written lecture, word search and dictation were used as a third stage. Such inconsistency that the teachers reported as visual and auditory teaching strategies through verbal reporting could be one of the potential limitations found in the verbal report measures (e.g., observations and oral interview).

What is more, the results obtained from the teachers' interviews were consistent with these findings as they were observed using the visual strategy types like note & lecture and demonstrations at a secondary level. On the other hand, the other respondent believed that he used visual type of teaching strategies like note and lecture, or written lecture followed by auditory types such as group discussion and question & answer. In addition, all the respondents confirmed that they employed the kinaesthetic activities at a third level. However, the results of the teachers' interviews were contradictory to these previous findings in some degree. Recalling from the interview result, this study revealed that two of the respondents claimed that they frequently used auditory-oriented teaching strategies like oral lectures and Socratic Method in advance. This result of course corresponds with previous research conducted in a secondary school to examine the teaching methods. Thus, Hodges (1982) found that approximately 90% of the traditional classroom is geared to the auditory learner, demonstrating the frequency of oral lectures.

According to the interviewer, the reasons behind some contradiction of the interview results to those of the questionnaire and observation might be that the teachers were not fully aware of all the different types of teaching strategies as they witnessed this on the other sections of the videoed interview.

The above findings were also supported somehow by another study undertaken on the students' learning styles and teachers' teaching strategies and revealed that video (visual type), discussion (auditory type) and role play (kinaesthetic type) had highest mean scores in a descending order (Fayombo, 2014). In addition, in terms of the major types of teaching styles (teaching strategies in the present study), the current study was similar to the finding of Mulu (2011) in that both visual and kinaesthetic teaching strategies were dominantly employed except the auditory type, which was one of major teaching modalities of the current study. With respect to the kinaesthetic type as the third major style or strategy, it was in line with that of a study conducted by Tadesse (2010) to understand female students and their teachers' styles at Tana Beles Girls' Boarding School in Beneshangul Regional state (as cited in Mulu, 2011). In fact, these teaching strategies become learning strategies when students independently select the appropriate ones and use them effectively to accomplish tasks or meet goals (Learning, 2002).

All in all, most of the results of the survey (questionnaire), observation and interview were congruent with a related study carried out by Karabuga (2015) that revealed the match between the learning styles of the students and the teaching styles of teachers, with a little mismatch or difference. As proposed by

Peacock (2002), teachers need to balance their teaching styles or strategies in order to avoid possible problems stemming from the mismatch between their teaching styles and/ or strategies and students' learning styles. Evidence also abounds that matching teaching strategies and learning styles has a positive impact on academic achievement, motivation and learning outcomes (Arthurs, 2007).

With respect to the findings obtained from the questionnaires of students and teachers as computed by an Independent sample t-test, there was no significant difference between visual teaching strategies of teachers and visual learning styles of students with p-value (.563) greater than 0.05. In addition, the difference between the two groups (auditory-oriented strategies with auditory learning styles) with p. value (.756) greater than 0.05. Thus, from this it is possible to say that both teachers and students had equivalent degree of preferences for many of strategies and styles respectively indicating that learners were learning in line with their preferred ways of learning. Therefore, it can be claimed that teachers were teaching their students with similar weight of their students' learning preferences. In other words, the classroom observations showed some degree of consistency of teaching strategies and learning style situations, which was in line with what was found from the questionnaire results.

On the contrary, the kinaesthetic type of teaching strategies, although it was insignificant at .05 level of significance, had showed fairly significant difference with the students' kinaesthetic learning styles at p. value (.078) < 0.1 significance level. This vital discrepancy reveals that students favored kinaesthetic learning styles and they tended to learn a lot through this channel, but the teachers fairly disfavored teaching students relying on movement-oriented and hands-on activities. The results found from the interview and the classroom observation supported this event. The grand mean comparison again corroborates with this result. Thus, teachers should be cautious not to be dependent on one type of teaching strategy and not to deny the preference of students that needs be addressed as per their learning needs (Berhanu, 2011).

The journey to the success of education is tough and full of difficulties and so is the journey to the fruit of teaching learning process, particularly matching students' styles or generally needs. According to Fayombo (2014), one of the persistent challenges or problems that secondary school and university teachers are facing is related to matching the teaching strategies with the students' learning styles for effective learning. Though teaching is a useful means of transmitting and sharing knowledge, it does not always result in learning; this can be seen clearly in the painful disparity between what teachers think they effectively taught and what the students indicate that they have learned on the examination papers.

Among the challenges the teacher interviewees identified were lack of awareness, diverse nature of the students' needs, time shortage and vastness of

the textbook, large class size and tendency towards traditional method of teaching, to mention a few. The first major challenge was teachers' lack of awareness of their own students' learning styles and their teaching strategies. That is to mean that even though most of the teachers thought that majority of the students were visual learners, they could not know the learning styles of individuals as a whole and in particular with supported evidence.. For instance, Daniel (2004) notes that most teachers in secondary schools and instructors in higher institutions have no enough and/ or refreshment training on teaching, particularly in the methodologies. The second problem was mixed type of style preferences of needs of the students. The diversified nature of students' learning styles and in sum the presence of individual differences among learners was one of the greatest challenges for teachers to accommodate the teaching with students' interests. For instance, regarding to individual difference as a challenge, gender difference has its own influence. Males and females learn differently from each other (Cavanaugh, 2002). Males tend to be more kinaesthetic, tactual, and visual, and they need more mobility in a more informal environment than females. The third temptation was time constraints and width of the textbook. The respondents replied that it had been difficult, demanding and time consuming to utilize two or more strategies and to address the different learning styles of students within one period. Regarding the issue of matching the teaching strategies, according to Levine (1985), the challenge becomes providing enough time and employing instructional strategies so that all students can achieve the same level of learning. Similarly, almost these major challenges were also identified from a study carried out to examine students' the perceptions and Practices of active learning in three secondary schools in Dawro Zone of Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia (Mulatu and Bezabih, 2018).

To sum up, the teacher interviewees identified, the major challenges were were lack of awareness (Daniel, 2004), diverse nature of the students' needs (Cavanaugh, 2002), time shortage and vastness of the textbook (Levine, 1985), large class size, and tendency towards traditional method of teaching (Hodges, in Boersma, 2008 and Daniel, 2004).

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

The results obtained from the classroom observation, the interview and the students' questionnaire helped the investigator in figuring out some important points about the students. Most of the students favoured learning through visual learning styles by using lots of visual inputs like pictures, diagrams, text books lectures followed by notes. It can be realized that these students were more likely to get much information from the teachers' visual type strategies like note and lecture, individual work and demonstrations. The second preference was for auditory mode through which students obtained information by means of group



discussion, explanation, oral lecture and question& answer strategies. On the other side, students showed interest in learning English language using a third level, kinaesthetic through moving from one class to another, taking notes, doing project works and so on. According to the finding, what was remarked in those preparatory school students was that nearly most of the three groups of students had similar degree of preferences for each modality indicating that they had multiple style preferences.

The findings found mainly from teachers' questionnaires and classroom observation indicated that the majority of EFL teachers had better practices on the visual and auditory activities and materials than the kinaesthetic ones. As a result, some of them preferred to use lecturing and writing on the board, others favoured using tables, diagrams, pictures to clarify verbal explanation, while others preferred to use individual work and group discussion. They still provided their learners with some kinds of hands-on of activities such as note taking and assigning project works-assignments and work sheets whose answers are worked out where available. In addition to teachers' different ways of teaching, students also showed differences in when they processed the information.

Generally, the current study has come up with the following major conclusions: The majority of the students were visual learners. These students had the tendency to learn best when they got much learning and teaching visual materials. There were also six types of learners who were visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, and bi-modal: visual-auditory, visual-kinaesthetic and auditory-kinaesthetic descending in percentages. This implies that some learners learn best through two or more modes. Moreover, visual and auditory-oriented teaching strategies in general that include lecture and note, and pair work and group discussion in particular respectively were the most dominant teaching strategies. This signals that teachers repeatedly employed some EFL strategies. Furthermore, there was no statistically significant difference between the teaching strategies and the learning styles except for the kinaesthetic style, which was observed between the two groups. This indicates that the teachers' dominance only on some strategies resulted in using the kinaesthetic strategies rarely. These seem to be due to the fact why lack of awareness, diverse nature of students, and frequent use of the traditional method were found to be the major challenges leading to mismatches between teaching strategies and learning styles.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations regarding EFL learning Styles and teaching Strategies have been forwarded:



1. Primarily, teachers should committed in recognizing the central uses of teaching strategies and identifying of students' learning styles, more importantly, the benefit of balancing these two.
2. EFL teachers need to assess styles and strategies in the foreign language classroom.
3. Foreign language teachers can benefit by assessing the VAK learning styles used by their students because such assessments leads to greater understanding of learners' styles or needs. Teachers should adjust foreign language instructions and strategies to best suit learners' styles

Realizing that some learners might need instruction presented more visually, while others might require more auditory, kinaesthetic or tactile types of instruction is of paramount importance. With adequate knowledge about their individuals' style preferences, teachers should provide the various types of instructions, a balanced instruction suitable for multiple style students. Apart from these, teachers must encourage students to strengthen their students' weaker learning styles so that they can benefit much equally through all modes.

4. Remember that there is no single foreign language instructional strategy that fits all students.

Foreign language teachers should do better by employing instructional approaches and combining various types of teaching strategies to respond to the needs of all students in the classroom.

5. EFL teachers need to prepare to conduct studies about foreign language instructional strategy.

Teachers ought to have some simple instructions to check learners' learning styles and strategies. Beyond this, teachers need to be alert for other factors that challenge the meeting of students' needs with the instruction like large class size, workload, time constraints, students' cultural and educational backgrounds, lack of experiences and commitments, and students' poor attitude towards the subject matter.

6. The government should arrange new or refreshment trainings about the existing approaches, methods, strategies, and procedures at a regular basis in order for helping teachers to empower their students in contemporary fashion.
7. As a final point, the current study, which was undertaken on physiological dimension-perceptual modalities-encourages interested investigators and researchers to replicate the study in the same or different contexts: psychological, sociological, etc. at different academic levels. Utmost in the future, if possible though mandatory, it is advisable to examine the learning styles of Ethiopian students as a

whole as examined in China, Poland, Russia, Arab, Hungary, Spain, Egypt and so on, to better reorganize the educational curriculum.

## REFERENCES

- Aynalem S, Abebe F, Guadie Z, and Bires Z. (2015) .Students' Preference for the Various Teaching Methods in Tourism Courses: A Case of Tourism Management Department, Madawalabu University. *J Tourism Hospital 4*: 175. doi:10.4172/21670269.1000175.
- Ayua, G. A. (2017, September 7). *Effective Teaching Strategies* [Workshop]. A Paper Delivered on the Occasion of Orientation and Refresher Workshop for Teachers of Vertex Nursery and Primary School, Makurdi, Benue State, Nigeria. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/337946302\\_EFFECTIVE\\_TEACHING\\_STRATEGIES](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/337946302_EFFECTIVE_TEACHING_STRATEGIES)
- Berhanu, F. (2011). *An Exploration of Students' Learning Style Preferences and Teachers' Awareness of Accommodating Strategies in EFL Contexts* [Unpublished MEd Thesis in Bahir Dar University].
- Boersma, J.E. (2008). Ethiopian Instructors' Experience with Accommodating EFL Students' Learning Styles. *European journal of English Studies*, 10(3), 123-142. Retrieved October 12, 2016, from [https://shareok.org/bitstream/handle/11244/7055/English%20Department\\_06.pdf?](https://shareok.org/bitstream/handle/11244/7055/English%20Department_06.pdf?)
- Border, L., & Chism, N. (1992). *Teaching for diversity*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Cassidy, S., & Eachus, P. (2000). Learning style, academic belief systems, self-report student proficiency and academic achievement in higher education. *Educational Psychology*, 20(3), 307-322. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/713663740>
- Cavanaugh, D. (2002). Cavanaugh, D. (2002). *Hemispheric preference*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Coffield, F., Ecclestone, K., Hall, E., and Moseley, D. (2004). *Should we be using learning styles? What research has to say to practice?* Learning and skills research centre. Viewed on 23 May, 2006 at [www.LSRC.ac.uk](http://www.LSRC.ac.uk)
- Cubero, G. R. (2004). *Teaching Strategies*: Retrieved on March 03, 2017, from <http://www.readingrockets.org/strategies/jigsaw>.
- Curry, L. (1990). A critique of the research on learning styles. *Educational leadership*, 10, 50-56. Retrieved from: <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ416434>
- Daniel, D. (2004). Observations and reflections of the higher education teachers on the quality of teaching and learning in higher education in Ethiopia: *The Ethiopian Journal of Higher Education*, vol. 1, No (1), pp110.

- Dörnyei, Z. (2005). *The psychology of the language learner: Individual differences in second language acquisition*. London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Fayombo, G. A. (2014). Enhancing learning outcomes in Psychology through active learning strategies in classroom and online learning environments. *International Journal of Learning and Development*, 4(4),114130.Doi:10.5296/ijld.v4i4.6703.Available at: <http://www.macrothink.org/journal/index.php/ijld/article/view/6703/5504>
- Felder, R., (1993). Reaching the second tier: Learning and teaching strategies in college science education. *Journal of College Science Teaching*, 23(5), 286-290.
- Felder, R. & Henrique, E. R., (1995). Learning and teaching strategies in foreign and second language education. *Foreign Language Annals*, 28 (1), 21-31.
- Fleming, N.D. & Mills, C. (1992a). Helping students understand how they learn. *The Teaching Professor*, 7 (4), 44-63.
- Gardner, H. (1983). *Frames of mind: The theory of multiple intelligences* (10th edition). New York: Basic Books.
- Jaleel, S & Thomas, M.A. (2019). *Learning Styles-Theories and Implications for Teaching*. Horizon Research Publishing, USA. Retrieved February, 17, 2021, from <https://www.hrpub.org/download/book16-978-1-943484-20-1.pdf>
- Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Laboratory of Comparative Human Cognition* (1986). Contributions of cross-cultural research to educational practice: *American Psychologist*, 41, 1049-1058.
- Mebratu Mulatu & Woldemariam Bezabih (2018). Perceptions and Practices of EFL Teachers in Implementing Active Learning in English Classes: The Case of Three Selected Secondary Schools In Dawro Zone, Snnprs, Ethiopia. *International Journal of Education Vol. 10*.
- Meskerem, B. (2014). *Teaching and learning styles at the graduate programs of Addis Ababa university*: published MA Thesis, AAU, Addis Ababa.
- Mulu, W. (2011). *An investigation of Students' Learning Style Preferences and Teachers' Teaching Style Preferences in EFL Classrooms* [Unpublished MEd Thesis in Bahir Dar University].
- Reid, J. (1988). The learning styles preference of ESL students. *TESOL Quarterly*, 21(1), 87-11.

- 
- Reiff, J. (1992). *What research says to the teacher: Learning Styles*. Washington, DC: National Education Association
- Riding, R. & Cheema, I. (1991). Cognitive styles: An overview and integration. *Educational Psychology*, 11(3&4), 193-215.
- Shaunessy, E. (2000). Questioning techniques in the gifted classroom. *Gifted Child Today*, 23(5), 14.
- Tesfaye, J.G. (2009). *Learning Styles and Strategies of Ethiopian Secondary School Students in Learning Mathematics*. University of South Africa. Retrieved January 21, 2017, from <http://hdl.handle.net/10500/3125>
- Tigabu Teshager (2018). *Students' preferences for EFL Teaching Strategies: A case of Aferewanat Preparatory and Secondary School, South Gondar* [Unpublished Research manuscript].
- Tigabu Teshager (2019). *Students' preferences for EFL Teaching Strategies: A case of Goh Preparatory and Secondary School, South Gondar* [Research manuscript submitted for publication].
- Whalley, J. (2017). *The Definition of Strategy: Building Brands*, Retrieved on August 17, 2019, from <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/plan-action-designed-achieve-long-term-goal-overall-aim-john-whalley>