Language Learning Styles of First Year College Students at Sulu State College

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Abstract

Background: The process of language learning is intricate and multifaceted, encompassing the acquisition and progressive development of linguistic skills, which in turn facilitate effective communication. **Objectives**: To examine and describe the demographic profile of first-year college students at Sulu State College, their language learning styles, and interrelationship of such variables. **Methods**: This study is descriptive-correlational research and focused on first-year college students (n=100) at Sulu State College who were enrolled in the academic year 2022 to 2023. A two-parts questionnaire which delt on demographic profile and a standardized adopted tool which measures college students' language learning styles which included their visual language, auditory numerical, social group, visual numerical, kinesthetics-tactile, expressive oral, auditory language, social individual, and expressive-written. Research Ethics Committee (REC) of the Sulu State College approves the conduct of the study and data gathered were analyzed and processed on SPSS version 21 utilizing the frequency, percentage distribution, mean, standard deviation, and Pearson r. **Results**: Most of the college students as respondents were young females enrolled from various course and with parents varied educational backgrounds. The students exhibit diverse learning styles across various categories, including visual, auditory, social, kinesthetic-tactile, expressive oral, and expressive-written styles. The study also revealed significant correlations between different language learning styles, emphasizing the interconnectedness of these preferences. **Conclusion**: This study on language learning styles among first-year college students at Sulu State College highlights the importance of understanding individual preferences and the impact they have on language learning outcomes. The findings of this research contribute to the existing body of knowledge on language education and provide valuable insights for educational practitioners, administrators, and curriculum developers in creating supportive and inclusive learning environments.

Keywords: College Students; Language; Learning Styles; Preference.

Introduction

Language learning is a complex and dynamic process that involves the acquisition and development of linguistic skills, enabling individuals to effectively communicate in a new language[1]. The field of language education has long recognized the significance of individual learning styles in language acquisition[2]. Research has shown that students exhibit diverse learning preferences, which can significantly impact their language learning experiences [3, 4].Research on learning styles has demonstrated that individuals have unique ways of acquiring and processing information[3, 5]. These preferences influence students' engagement, comprehension, and overall language learning outcomes[6-8]. Therefore, understanding the language learning styles of an early beginning journey of a college student in the academe is crucial for educators and institutions to create a supportive and effective learning environment.

By exploring the language learning styles of freshmen college students, this study contributes to the existing body of knowledge and provides a deeper understanding of language education. The objectives of this research aim to examine the demographic profile of first-year college students at Sulu State College, including variables such as gender, age, course, and parents' educational attainment. Understanding the demographic characteristics of the students provides essential context for analyzing and interpreting their language learning styles effectively.

Moreover, the research seeks to assess the language learning styles of the participants across various categories, such as visual language, auditory numerical, social group, visual numerical, kinesthetic-tactile, expressive oral, auditory language, social individual, and expressive-written. By exploring these categories, the study provides insights into the specific learning preferences and styles prevalent among freshmen or first-year college students.

The findings of this research have significant implications for language education practices by understanding the language learning styles of first-year college students, educators and administrators can tailor their teaching methodologies and curricula to accommodate diverse learning preferences. This alignment between instructional strategies and students' learning styles can promote engagement, motivation, and ultimately enhance language learning outcomes.

Furthermore, this research adds to the body of knowledge on language education by focusing specifically on the language learning styles of first-year college students at Sulu State College. While existing studies have explored language learning styles in various contexts, the examination of these styles within the unique context of Sulu State College contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of language education practices in this specific setting.

By acknowledging the importance of language learning styles, educators and institutions can create a student-centered approach to language education. This research serves as a valuable resource for educators, administrators, and curriculum developers, assisting them in designing effective language education programs that address the diverse needs and preferences of first-year college students at Sulu State College.

Methods

Study Design

This study is descriptive-correlational research. Descriptively, it describes the respondents' profile in terms of gender, age, course, and parents' educational attainment; extent of language learning styles in terms of visual language, auditory numerical, social group, visual numerical, kinesthetics tactile, expressive oral, auditory language, social individual, and expressiveness written. Comparatively, this study explored the differences between language learning styles and respondents' profile when grouped according to age, gender, course, and parents' educational attainment. As described, A descriptive correlational research design is a type of research methodology used to explore and describe relationship betweenn groups, variables, or conditions. The primary goal of this design is to describe and analyze the relationships between the groups or variables under investigation [9, 10].

Participants and Study Setting

The study focused on first-year college students at Sulu State College who were enrolled in the academic year 2022 to 2023. The inclusion criteria include being officially enrolled during the specified year and a regular freshmen student in the following courses such as Arts & Science (AS), CSITE, BSBA, Nursing, Education, and Agriculture.

The exclusion criteria for respondents were individuals who were not first-year students, students who were not enrolled in the aforementioned course during the research period, or students who had expressed intention of non-participation. Additionally, participants with language-related disabilities or impairments were excluded from the study to maintain consistency in analyzing learning styles within the general student population.

The study was conducted within the premises of Sulu State College, which served as the research setting. Sulu State College was an esteemed higher education institution located in Sulu Province, Philippines. It

served as a center of learning, providing educational opportunities for students pursuing various academic programs and disciplines. With a commitment to excellence in teaching, research, and community service, Sulu State College offered a conducive learning environment, equipped with modern facilities and experienced faculty members. The college played a crucial role in empowering first-year college students to develop their language learning skills and achieve their academic goals, while also contributing to the socio-economic development of the region through its educational initiatives.

Instruments or Tool

This instrument or tool used in this study is two-parts. The first part is about the respondents' demographic profile which includes their age, gender, course enrolled, and educational attainment of parents. Then, the second part of is adapted which was developed based on Mkonto's (2015) questionnaire on college students' language learning styles. It is a structured instrument designed to gather information about the language learning styles of college students. The questionnaire is a 4-point Likert scale format and ask questions about components of language learning styles which included their visual language, auditory numerical, social group, visual numerical, kinesthetics-tactile, expressive oral, auditory language, social individual, and expressive-written[11].

Data Collection

A sample of first-year students was randomly selected to participate in the study. A structured questionnaire, specifically developed for this research, was administered to the selected participants. The questionnaires were distributed in paper format during designated class sessions which pre-approved from class adviser and school administrator prior doing so. Participants were instructed to provide honest and accurate responses. Additionally, participants were encouraged to express clarifications and concerns about the questionnaire which they deemed vague or irrelevant. After data collection, the responses were compiled and coded for analysis using appropriate statistical software including Microsoft Excel and Statistical Package and Service Solution (SPSS)version 21. Throughout the data gathering process, strict adherence to ethical guidelines and procedures was maintained to ensure participant confidentiality and data integrity.

Data Analysis

The gathered data based from the two-parts questionnaire were coded in Microsoft Excel and SPSS version 21 for the analysis and presentation of findings. Frequency and percentage distribution were computed and presented about the respondents' demographic profile including age, gender, course enrolled, and educational attainment of parents. Then, mean and standard deviation has been applied for the categories of the language learning styles. The correlation of data was done through Pearson r since the level of measurement of the variable language learning styles is scale.

Ethical Consideration

The researcher obtained ethical approval from the Research Ethics Committee (REC) of the Sulu State College, ensuring that the study adhered to ethical guidelines and principles. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, clarifying the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and the confidentiality of their responses.

To protect the participants' rights and privacy, data confidentiality was maintained throughout the study. The collected data were securely stored and accessible only to the researcher. Any personal identifying information was kept separate from the collected data to ensure anonymity. Throughout the study, the researchers prioritized the well-being and rights of the participants, aiming to minimize any potential harm or discomfort. The study was conducted in a respectful and professional manner, with participants' perspectives and experiences being valued and respected.

Results

The table 1 presented below provides information on the demographic profile of the respondents which includes data on age, gender, course/department, and parents' educational attainment. It shows that Most of them are female (65%) with majority of age group are 21 years old and below (54%) and 21 to 22 years old (32%) with few 23 years old and above (12%).The table also presents the distribution of respondents across different courses/departments.

The highest number of respondents are enrolled in the Arts and Science (AS) course(26%), followed by BSBA (24%), Nursing (10%), Education (15%), Agriculture (15%), and CSITE (10%) together with Nursing (10%) as the least. The educational attainment of the respondents' parents shows that majority has completed high school education (40%), followed by with a bachelor's degree (32%), elementary educational background (28%), and none have a master's or doctorate degree.

Table 1.Respondents Demographic Profile

Demographic Profile	*Freq.*	*% Dist.*
Age		
21 years old& below	54	54.0
21 to 22 years old	32	32.0
23 years old& above	12	12.0
Gender		
Male	35	35.0
Female	65	65.0
Course/Department		
Arts & Science (AS)	26	26.0
CSITE	10	10.0
BSBA	24	24.0
Nursing	10	10.0
Education	15	15.0
Agriculture	15	15.0
Parents' Educational Attainment		
Elementary	28	28.0
High School	40	40.0
Bachelor's degree	32	32.0
Master's degree	0	0.0
Doctorate degree	0	0.0
Total:	100	100.0

Table 2 presents the extent of language learning styles among the participants. The table includes the mean scores, standard deviations (SD), and interpretations for each language learning style category.In terms of visual language, participants strongly agreed (M = 3.76, SD = 0.42) that having clear instructions on how to do assignments made it easier for them to understand. They also strongly agreed (M = 3.60, SD = 0.55) that they would rather read a book themselves than listen to somebody reading to them. Additionally, they agreed (M = 3.47, SD = 0.62) that they preferred written directions over spoken ones. For auditory numerical style, participants agreed (M = 3.11, SD = 0.90) that they could solve math problems without writing them down. They also agreed (M = 3.26, SD = 0.76) that they worked better with numbers when they were given orally, and they agreed (M = 3.17, SD = 0.77) that they could remember numbers even without writing them down.

Regarding social group style, participants agreed (M = 3.43, SD = 0.57) that they asked classmates for help when they needed assistance in a subject. They also agreed (M = 3.29, SD = 0.54) that they liked working in

a group because they learned from others, and they agreed (M = 3.28, SD = 0.63) that they got more work done when working with others. In the visual numerical category, participants strongly agreed (M = 3.51, SD = 0.62) that they understood math better when they saw the numbers written down. They agreed (M = 3.36, SD = 0.65) that written math problems were easier for them to solve than oral ones, and they agreed (M = 3.39, SD = 0.64) that seeing numbers made it easier for them to work with them.

For kinesthetics tactile style, participants agreed (M = 3.39, SD = 0.58) that they remembered what they learned better when they were involved in practical work. They agreed (M = 3.46, SD = 0.57) that written math problems were easier for them to solve than oral ones, and they agreed (M = 3.34, SD = 0.60) that they liked projects where they had to make things with their hands. In the expressive oral style, participants agreed (M = 3.15, SD = 0.59) that they would rather do an oral presentation than write an assignment. They agreed (M = 3.21, SD = 0.59) that they engaged more in discussions than in writing on their own, and they agreed (M = 3.21, SD = 0.67) that they preferred oral tests/examinations to written ones.

Table 2 Extent of Language Learning Styles

Language Learning Styles	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Visual Language			
o Having clear instruction on how to do on assignment make it easier to understand	3.76	0.42	Strongly Agree
o I would rather read a book myself that I listen to somebody reading to me.	3.60	0.55	Strongly Agree
o I prefer to be given written directions than spoken ones.	3.47	0.62	Agree
Auditory Numerical			
o I can solve math problem without writing them down.	3.11	0.90	Agree
o I work better with numbers when they are given to me orally.	3.26	0.76	Agree
o I remember numbers for even without writing them down.	3.17	0.77	Agree
Social Group			
o If I need help in the subject, I ask a classmate for help.	3.43	0.57	Agree
o I like to work in a group because I learn from other in the group.	3.29	0.54	Agree
o I get more work done when I work with others.	3.28	0.63	Agree
Visual Numerical			
o I understand math better when I see the numbers written down.	3.51	0.62	Strongly Agree
o Written math problems are easier for me to do than the ones given orally.	3.36	0.65	Agree
o When I see numbers it makes easier for me to work with them.	3.39	0.64	Agree
KinestheticTactile			
o When I am involved in practical work, I remember what I have learnt better.	3.39	0.58	Agree
o Written math problems are easier for me to do than the ones given orally.	3.46	0.57	Agree
o I like projects where I have to make things with my hands.	3.34	0.60	Agree
Expressive Oral			
o I would rather do an oral presentation than write an assignment.	3.15	0.59	Agree
o I engage more in discussions than in writing on my own.	3.21	0.59	Agree
o I prefer oral tests/examinations to written ones.	3.21	0.67	Agree
Auditory Language			
o I learn better when I listen in a lecture than when I study on my own.	3.58	0.49	Strongly Agree
o I remember things I heard better than things I have read.	3.33	0.66	Agree

o It is easier for me to understand what I have heard than what I have read.	3.45	0.60	Agree
Social Individual			
o I lean best when I study alone.	3.39	0.61	Strongly Agree
o I remember more of what I learn if I learn it when I am alone.	3.37	0.64	Agree
o When I work on an assignment, I like working alone.	3.33	0.58	Agree
Expressiveness Written			
o I enjoy doing written assignment.	3.39	0.56	Strongly Agree
o I would rather write an assignment than involve in discussion.	3.25	0.60	Agree
o I prefer written test to oral test.	3.36	0.59	Agree

Regarding auditory language style, participants strongly agreed (M = 3.58, SD = 0.49) that they learned better when listening in a lecture compared to studying on their own. They agreed (M = 3.33, SD = 0.66) that they remembered things they heard better than things they read, and they agreed (M = 3.45, SD = 0.60) that it was easier for them to understand what they heard compared to what they read.In the social individual category, participants strongly agreed (M = 3.39, SD = 0.61) that they learned best when studying alone. They agreed (M = 3.37, SD = 0.64) that they remembered more of what they learned when they were alone, and they agreed (M = 3.33, SD = 0.58) that they liked working alone on assignments.

Lastly, in the expressiveness written style, participants strongly agreed (M = 3.39, SD = 0.56) that they enjoyed doing written assignments. They agreed (M = 3.25, SD = 0.60) that they would rather write an assignment than involve in discussions, and they agreed (M = 3.36, SD = 0.59) that they preferred written tests to oral tests.

Table 3 presents the correlation between different categories of language learning styles. The Pearson correlation coefficients (r) and significance values (Sig) indicate the strength and significance of the relationships between the variables. Results indicate that visual language is significantly correlated with auditory numerical (r = .375, p < .001), social group (r = .229, p = .022), visual numerical (r = .277, p = .005), kinesthetic-tactile (r = .289, p = .004), expressive oral (r = .307, p = .002), and auditory language (r = .434, p < .001). Auditory numerical is significantly correlated with visual numerical (r = .323, p = .001), kinesthetic-tactile (r = .242, p = .015), expressive oral (r = .367, p < .001), and auditory language (r = .327, p = .001). Furthermore, visual numerical is significantly correlated with kinesthetic-tactile (r = .474, p < .001), expressive oral (r = .374, p < .001), and auditory language (r = .259, p = .009). Other correlations between variables were not found to be statistically significant. These findings provide insights into the interrelationships among different language learning styles and can contribute to a deeper understanding of the language learning process.

Table 3Correlation of the Categories of Language Learning Styles

Correlated Variables		Pearson *r*	Sig	Interpretation
Visual Language	Auditory Numerical	.375	.000	Significant
	Social Group	.229	.022	Significant
	Visual Numerical	.277	.005	Significant
	Kinesthetic-Tactile	.289	.004	Significant
	Expressive Oral	.307	.002	Significant
	Auditory Language	.434	.000	Significant
	Social Individual	.116	.252	Not Significant
	Expressive – Written	.083	.410	Not Significant
Auditory Numerical	Social Group	.100	.323	Not Significant
	Visual Numerical	.323	.001	Significant
	Kinesthetic-Tactile	.242	.015	Significant

	Expressive Oral	.367	.000	Significant
	Auditory Language	.327	.001	Significant
	Social Individual	.125	.215	Not Significant
	Expressive – Written	.179	.075	Not Significant
Social Group	Visual Numerical	.052	.607	Not Significant
	Kinesthetic-Tactile	-.030	.768	Not Significant
	Expressive Oral	.213	.033	Significant
	Auditory Language	.202	.043	Significant
	Social Individual	-.004	.966	Not Significant
	Expressive – Written	.062	.542	Not Significant
Visual Numerical	Kinesthetic-Tactile	.474	.000	Significant
	Expressive Oral	.374	.000	Significant
	Auditory Language	.259	.009	Significant
	Social Individual	.150	.136	Not Significant
	Expressive – Written	.118	.243	Not Significant
Kinesthetic-Tactile	Expressive Oral	.211	.035	Significant
	Auditory Language	.167	.096	Not Significant
	Social Individual	.140	.164	Not Significant
	Expressive – Written	.042	.679	Not Significant
Expressive Oral	Auditory Language	.152	.132	Not Significant
	Social Individual	.093	.358	Not Significant
	Expressive – Written	.255	.010	Significant
Auditory Language	Social Individual	.287	.004	Significant
	Expressive – Written	.327	.001	Significant
Social Individual	Expressive – Written	.533	.000	Significant

Discussion

The findings provide valuable insights into the preferences and styles prevalent among freshmen college students, which can inform language education practices and create a supportive learning environment.The demographic profile of the respondents revealed interesting patterns since majority of the participants were female which aligns with previous research that has shown a higher representation of females in language learning contexts [2]. The varied age distribution suggest that the study primarily focused on young learners who are in the early stages of their language learning journey represented across different courses which highlighted the diversity of academic interests among first-year college students. These findings reflect the multidisciplinary nature of the institution and the varied language learning needs across different academic disciplines. The parents' educational attainment of the respondents provided insights into the educational background of the participants' families. Findings suggest that the participants come from diverse educational backgrounds, which can influence their language learning experiences and preferences [1].

The assessment of language learning styles among the participants revealed interesting patterns across various categories. In terms of visual language, the participants strongly agreed that having clear instructions on how to do assignments made it easier for them to understand. This finding aligns with previous research that has emphasized the importance of visual aids and clear guidelines for visual learners [5, 12]. The participants also expressed a preference for reading books themselves rather than listening to someone reading to them, indicating a preference for visual input. Similarly, the preference for written directions over spoken ones highlights the significance of visual stimuli in their learning process.

The participants showed agreement with auditory numerical style, indicating that they can solve math problems without writing them down and that they work better with numbers when given orally. These findings suggest that auditory stimuli play a role in their understanding and processing of numerical information. The ability to remember numbers without writing them down further supports their auditory

numerical learning preference. These findings emphasize the importance of incorporating auditory components in language education activities, particularly in numerical contexts.

Regarding social group style, the participants expressed a preference for seeking help from classmates when needed, indicating the significance of social interaction in their learning process. The preference for working in groups and the belief that they learn from others highlight the social aspect of their language learning experiences. These findings emphasize the importance of collaborative learning and peer interaction in language education [6, 13].

In the visual numerical category, the participants strongly agreed that they understand math better when numbers are written down. This finding suggests a reliance on visual representations in their understanding and comprehension of numerical concepts. The preference for written math problems and the ease of working with numbers when they are seen further support their visual numerical learning style. These findings highlight the importance of visual aids and written materials in facilitating their learning process.

The participants showed agreement with the kinesthetic-tactile style, indicating that they remember what they learn better when they are involved in practical work. This finding suggests a preference for hands-on activities and physical engagement in their learning process. The preference for projects where they can make things with their hands further supports their kinesthetic-tactile learning preference. These findings emphasize the significance of experiential and kinesthetic learning opportunities in language education [7, 14].

In terms of expressive oral style, the participants expressed a preference for oral presentations over written assignments. This finding suggests their inclination towards verbal communication and engagement in discussions. The preference for oral tests/examinations further highlights their comfort with oral expression. These findings emphasize the importance of incorporating oral communication activities and assessments in language education to cater to their expressive oral learning style[15].

Regarding auditory language style, the participants strongly agreed that they learn better when listening in a lecture compared to studying on their own. This finding suggests their preference for auditory input and the significance of auditory stimuli in their learning process. The belief that they remember things they hear better than things they read further supports their auditory language learning preference. These findings emphasize the importance of auditory materials and listening activities in language education [3, 16].

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study on language learning styles among first-year college students at Sulu State College highlights the importance of understanding individual preferences and the impact they have on language learning outcomes. The research findings indicate that students exhibit diverse learning styles across various categories, including visual, auditory, social, kinesthetic-tactile, expressive oral, and expressive-written styles. These preferences influence students' engagement, comprehension, and learning experiences. The study also revealed significant correlations between different language learning styles, emphasizing the interconnectedness of these preferences. By recognizing and accommodating students' unique learning styles, educators and institutions can design effective language education programs that promote student-centered learning and enhance language learning outcomes. The findings of this research contribute to the existing body of knowledge on language education and provide valuable insights for educational practitioners, administrators, and curriculum developers in creating supportive and inclusive learning environments.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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