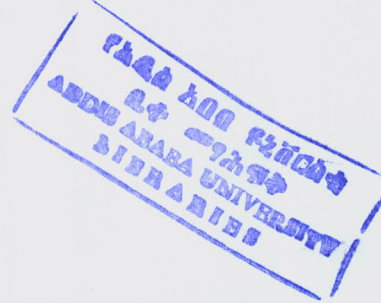


**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTE OF LANGUAGE STUDIES  
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE  
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES**



**AN EXPLORATION INTO THE ALIGNMENT OF  
TEACHING AND LEARNING STYLES IN THE  
CONTEXT OF MULTIETHNIC EFL CLASSROOM.**

**BY  
YOSEF TIKU**

**JULY, 2009**

**Addis Ababa**

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**A THESIS PRESENTED TO THE INSTITUTE OF LANGUAGE STUDIES  
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE IN PARTIAL  
FULFILMENT TO THE REQUIRMENTS OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF  
ARTS IN TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE**

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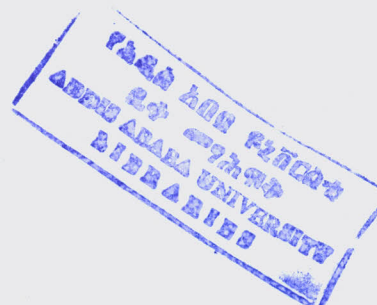
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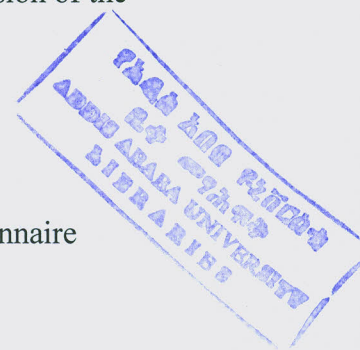
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## ***Abstract***

*This study aimed at investigating the extent to which the teaching style preferences of EFL teachers match or mismatch with the preferred perceptual learning styles exhibited by multi-ethnic EFL students. The study applied both quantitative and qualitative research design. Data on learning styles were collected using Reid's (1987) perceptual learning style preference questionnaire (PLSPQ). Information on teachers preferred teaching styles was obtained using the adapted version of the PLSPQ. Semi-structure interview was conducted with the students and teachers to gather additional data. One hundred sixty EFL students and seven EFL teachers were selected as respondents of the questionnaire at Gambella Teachers Education College and Openo Technical and Vocational College in Gambella Regional State. Preference means and percentages were calculated for the learning styles and the teaching styles. Description was given to the responses to the interview. Results revealed that there are differences between the teachers preferred teaching styles and the students learning style preference. Auditory and Individual styles were expressed as major preferences of students. Group, Kinesthetic, and Auditory styles were indicated as teachers' major preference. Significant differences in the learning preferences among students from different ethnic groups were also investigated. The interview result indicated that teachers do not assess students' learning styles, and hence mismatch often occur in the classroom which affected the success of students learning. In line with finding, recommendations have been given at the end.*

***Key terms-*** *Learning style preference, teaching style preference, ESL/EFL, Culture, ethnic.*

## The Contextual Meaning of Key Terms

- **Multi cultural/ Multiethnic Classroom-** A classroom which comprises learners of different ethnic background.
- **Multi cultural Instruction-** A classroom instruction from diversified point of views.
- **Multi style Approach-** A class room approach which consists of different teaching styles or modes of delivery.
- **Highlanders** – A word that is used to describe different ethnic group people (Amhara, Oromo, etc) who do not belong to the native ethnic groups (Agnwak, Nuer, etc) in Gambella Region.



# Chapter One

## Introduction

### 1.1. Background of the problem

In order to conduct effective EFL teaching-learning process, it is fundamental to help students have positive attitude towards the language, the teacher, and the method of teaching so that they engage fully and actively in discussions and other activities. This is not easy to achieve in a heterogeneous class unless teachers make effort to adjust the entire teaching-learning process to the diverse needs of the learners. As a result, the learner factor, in spite of the complexities attached to it, has increasingly become an important issue for educators. One such issue is to be mindful of the varying ways with which learners possess their classroom learning, namely learning styles.

Beyond the universal characteristics of human traits that all mankind exhibits there seems to be basic differences in the way individual learners approach problems, learn a set of facts, or organize ideas. With this regard, it is reasonable to presume that there exist much wider variations of learning preferences in a culturally heterogeneous classroom as compared to culturally homogenous ones. On the other hand, with the emergence of various second language teaching methods and approaches in the literature, there is a wide opportunity for teachers to teach in many different ways. Some teachers lecture, others demonstrate; some emphasize group discussions and others individual activities, etc. Therefore, this research is expected to shed some light and provide meaningful suggestions to overcoming the problems that may arise regarding learning styles of students and how to address multi-ethnic/culture learners in EFL classroom.

Learning styles have been studied extensively in the context of foreign language learning and findings have indicated the possibility of mismatch between teaching and learning styles (Felder and Silverman, 1988; Oxford 1990). Besides, considerable efforts have been made to postulate the possible factors that shape a previously particular learning style of students. As a result, a number of writers reported that cultural background is one of the factors which plays crucial role in the development of individual learning style. For

instance, Reid (1987) investigated whether culture accounts for differences in learning styles and reported that people from certain cultures differently favored different modalities of learning. Another study conducted by Auyeng and Sands (1996) examined how individualism-collectivism, a key dimension of cultural variability in cross-cultural research, is reflected in the learning styles of students from different cultural background. Willing (1988), Nuby and Oxford (1996), and other researchers also agreed and asserted that there are greater variations in the learning preferences of multi-culture/ethnic EFL students.

## **1.2. Statement of the Problem**

Ethiopia is a culturally and ethnically diverse country with many languages. The expansion of regional colleges and national universities around the country is a recent phenomenon which increases the opportunity of attending higher education for different cultural group students. It is true that English has a significant role in the country's educational institutions. It is given as a subject starting from grade one up to the tertiary level and it serves also as a medium of instruction at secondary and tertiary levels. In line with this reality, the success of students in their academic performance is highly dependent up on their English language ability in which other courses are taught.

As it has been discussed so far, scholars have made considerable effort to show how cultural conditioning is reflected in the learning style preferences of students. In one or the other way cultural background influences the development of individual learning style. The form of the education process through which members of a society learn how to function within a culture must, in fact, play a critical role in reinforcing, if not shaping, learning style preferences that are, therefore, subject to cultural conditioning. This tentative notion of cultural learning style which repurposes learning as a culturally-based phenomenon may then explain why teaching methods, learning tasks which promote learning in some context may be ineffective in others where other learning style preferences have been reinforced.

In relative terms, the studies mentioned above only represent a limited body of research and evidence from multicultural international students. However, such work is of

sufficient value to justify the formulation of the current study hypothesis that *the presence of multi-ethnic/culture students within the same country may accentuate the diversity of learning styles likely to co-exist in ESL classroom*. The case could not be different in Ethiopia where there are a number of nations and nationalities with diverse cultural background. Hence, students who have different ethnic/culture backgrounds may come to EFL to classroom with different learning style preferences. With this in view, this study was conducted at Gambella Teachers Education College and Openo Technical and Vocational College in Gambella Regional State to address the following research questions:

1. What are the perceptual learning style preferences of ESL students, and the teaching styles of ESL teachers?
2. Is there a match or mismatch between the teaching and learning styles?
3. Do teachers apply standard tools to identify their learners learning style preferences?
4. To what extent the match or mismatch between the teaching and learning styles affect the effectiveness of students' EFL learning?

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

In line with the narratives that have been developed in the preceding discussion, the major objective of the study is to explore:

- Whether there is an alignment between the learning styles of students and the teaching styles used by their teachers,

In addition to this, the research investigates:

- The effects of a match/mismatch of the teaching and learning styles on students' EFL learning.
- Whether teachers apply standard instruments to identify their students learning style preferences.
- The possible sources of teaching and learning style preferences.

## **1.4 Significance of the Study**

The study is conducted in order to add to the body of existing knowledge on the importance of matching teaching styles to the divers learning styles that are likely to co-exist in culturally heterogeneous cohorts. Since Ethiopia is a country with diverse ethnics, there is a high probability that students come to classroom with different learning style preferences. Therefore, the study is expected to develop conceptual framework which can be used to provide language teaching practitioners and materials designers with an understanding of learning style variations in a culturally diverse contexts. Particularly, teachers can use the information to move toward an inclusive teaching approach so as to promote the engagement of their students in a multicultural setting. Moreover, curriculum developers and textbook writers may take into consideration the findings of the study so that course contents, learning tasks, and the approaches that are incorporated in the teaching/learning materials may satisfy the needs of at least the majority of the students, if not all. Finally, it may serve as a spring board for further researches in the area.

## **1.5 Delimitation of the study**

The issue of learning and teaching styles in a multi ethnic setting seems to have been given little attention in the present situation. Hence, the researcher found it necessary to limit the scope of the study to the perceptual teaching and learning styles in an EFL multiethnic classroom in Gambela Teachers' education College and Openo Technical and Vocational College for the following two reasons. The first one is the presence of EFL students from different ethnic backgrounds in the aforementioned colleges. The second reason is attributed to the effective and manageable use of time, resources and other factors while conducting the study.

## **1.6 Limitations of the study.**

The researcher encountered the following limitations in the course of the study. Firstly, since there are no such studies on the topic in our country so far it was impossible to make comparison with the findings of the present study. Secondly, there is lack of relevant literature on the teaching styles to make detail discussions. Thirdly, the number

of female EFL students in the study area was not sufficient enough to provide the necessary data. Therefore, the study did not discuss learning styles with regard to gender differences

# Chapter Two

## Review of Related Literature

### 2.1 The Concept of Learning Style

The literature in the educational psychology offers a number of definitions of learning style. The one which, by virtue of its encompassing properties, still commands benchmarking significance, remains that provided by Keefe (1979) cited in Richards and Lockhart (2005:59), according to whom “Learning styles are characteristic cognitive, affective, and psychological behaviors that serve as relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive, interact with, and respond to the learning environment”. In pursuit of keefe's definition, Brown (1994:104) defines style as a term

*... that refers to consistent and rather enduring tendencies or preferences within an individual. Styles are those general characteristics of intellectual functioning (and personality type, as well) that especially pertain to you as an individual that differentiate you from some one else.*

Researchers examined the 'relative stability' of those cognitive, affective, and psychological behaviors. For example, following the development of a concentric-rings model with cognitive personality elements at its epicentric, information processing in the middle ring and instructional preferences in the outer ring, Curry (1983), cited in De vita (2001:2), concluded that the most ingrained patterns are to be found at the core, with decreasing stability as we move toward the outer ring.

### 2.2 Learning Theories and Learning Styles

The investigation in to the learning style is deeply rooted in the theories of learning such as behavioral, cognitive and constructivist. Behavioral theory, whose main proponent is Skinner (1980), deals with the observable changes in behavior and reinforcement of such desired behaviors. According to this theory, learners are able to learn best by being rewarded at the 'right response. The educational literature termed these responses as

'operant conditioning'. This theory advocates students' learning process through replication of certain learning behavioral patterns based on tangible rewards or punishments. It has been hypothesized that these rewards can be associated, for example, with merit marks, various forms of academic approvals and special privileges. Accordingly, the educators should emphasize on materials that are high in structure through which learners can work gradually towards better educational achievement.

The failure, or at least the shortcomings, of behaviorist views of learning caused researchers to ask more ultimate questions which lead to the development of Cognitive theory. Cognitive theory of learning, as a novelty, originated by Jean Piaget (1971), is based on the assumption that information should be acquired and retained for use in the future if learning is to become learner-constructed, relevant and built upon prior knowledge. Cognitive learning is often organized in chunks and is built-in the memory of learner, enabling learners to use such information in the future. Cognitive models give learners control by introducing conceptual framework and relying on the learner to build connections. Piaget (1971) describes knowledge by emphasizing the concepts of assimilation and accommodation. Assimilation is the process by which the learner incorporates the logic of his/her own development and existing understanding or interpretative category in to the meaningful whole. Accommodation refers to the process by which human beings adapt their developing understanding and expectations to the realities and constrains of the social and physical world in order to arrive at better understanding and explanation.

Constructivist theory, primarily advocated by Bruner (1987), as another alternative to the previous theories of learning asserts that learners do not simply absorb and store information but they make active interpretations of experience and draw sound independent conclusions. Hence, students from the early schooling age develop active independent learning attitude and construct knowledge rather than receive it. Nevertheless, apart from cognitive approach to learning, educators become more concerned with how learners use, receive, construct or deconstruct knowledge.

Beyond the three learning theories just discussed, there are various taxonomies of types of human learning and other method processes universal to all. For example Gagne (1965), cited in Brown (1994:87) identified eight types of learning which are relevant to second language learning. These types of learning are:-

1. Signal learning: the individual learners to make a general diffuse response to a signal. This is the classical conditioned response of Pavlov.
2. Stimulus response learning: the learner acquires a precise response to a discriminated stimulus. What is learned is a connection or in Skinnerian terms, a discriminated operant, sometimes called an instrumental response.
3. Chaining what is acquired: is a chain of two or more stimulus-response connections. The conditions for such learning have also been described by skinner.
4. Verbal association: verbal association is the learning of chains that are verbal. Basically, the conditions resemble those for other (motor) chains. However, the presence of language in the human being makes this a special type because internal links may be selected from the individual's previously learned repertoire of language.
5. Multiple discriminations: the individual learns to make a number of different identifying responses to many different stimuli, which may resemble each other in physical appearance to a greater or lesser degree. Although the learning of each stimulus response connection is a simple occurrence, the connections tend to interfere with one another.
6. Concept learning: the learner acquires the ability to make a common response to a class of stimuli even though the individual members of that class may differ widely from each other. The learner is able to make a response that identifies an active class of objects or events.
7. Principle learning: in simplest terms, a principle is a chain of two or more concepts. In functions to organize behavior and experience. In Ausubel's terminology, a principle is "Subsumer"- a cluster of related concepts.
8. Problem solving: problem solving is a kind of learning that requires the internal events usually referred to as "thinking". Previously acquires concepts and principles are combined in a conscious focus on an unresolved or ambiguous set of events.

The learning theories have influenced the educational system in general, and the acquiring of ESL/EFL in particular. Hence, no doubt that their exposition in what follows is indeed inevitable for the clear illustration of the studies on students' learning style

preferences. Then, being influenced directly or indirectly by such theories of learning, many researchers began extending and developing several models and instruments to identify and classify learning style preferences of students such as, for example, Myers (1962), Kolb (1976,1984) Reid (1987), and Felder and Silverman (1988).

In addition to knowing the role of learning theories in underlying the studies of learning styles, it is also important to understand how learning styles are classified and discussed by different researchers in their quest to improve our awareness of individual and group learning preference in the classroom.

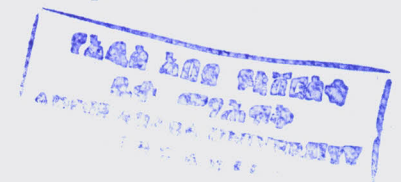
## 2.3 Dimensions of Learning Styles

As Ehrman (1996) notes learning styles are not necessarily dichotomous (black or white, present or absent). Learning styles rather generally operate on a continuum or on multiple intersecting continua. For example, a person might be more closure-oriented than open, or more extraverted than introverted, or equally visual and auditory but with lesser kinesthetic and tactile involvement. Few, if not all people could be classified as having all or nothing in any of these categories. The following part discusses the different aspects of learning styles.

### 2.3.1 Sensory Preferences

Sensory Preferences refer to the physical, perceptual learning channels with which the student is the most comfortable. Sensory preferences can be broken down in to four main areas: visual, auditory, kinesthetic (movement-oriented), and tactile (touch-oriented). The following explanations of four Sensory Preferences describe the characteristics of the learners. (Reid, 1987)

**Visual Learners** -these people learn well from seeing words in books, on the chalkboard, and in work books. They remember and understand information and instructions any visual backup can be very confusing. They don't like as much oral explanations as an auditory learner, and they can often learn alone, with a book. If they want to remember the information they should take notes of lecture and oral directions.



**Auditory Learners** -learn from hearing words spoken and from oral explanations. As opposed to visual learners, auditory people are comfortable without visual input and therefore enjoy and profit from lectures, conversations, and oral directions. They may remember information by reading aloud or moving their lips as they read, especially when they are learning new material.

**Kinesthetic Learners** -learn best by experience, by being involved physically in classroom experiences. They remember information well when they actively participate in activities, field trips and role-playing in the classroom. A combination of stimuli-for example, an audiotape combined with an activity will help them understand new material

**Tactile Learners** -learn best when they have the opportunity to do “hands-on” experiences with materials. That is, working on experiments in a laboratory, handling and building models, and touching and working with materials provide them with most successful learning situation. Writing notes or instructions can help them remember information, and physical involvement in class related activities may help them understand new information.

Reid (1987) demonstrated that ESL students varied significantly in their sensory preferences, with people from certain cultures differently favoring the three different modalities for learning. Accordingly, students from Asian cultures, for example, were often highly visual, with Koreans being the most visual, and Hispanic learners were frequently auditory. Other studies such as, for example, Reid (1995); Oxford and Anderson (1995) discovered that ESL students from a variety of cultures were tactile and kinesthetic in their Sensory Preferences.

### **2.3.2 Personality Types**

Personality type or psychological type is a construct based on the work of psychologist Carl Jung. According to Jung (1923) cited in Brown (1994:147) people are different in fundamental ways and that an individual has performances for “functioning” in ways that

are characteristic, or “typical” of that particular individual. Borrowing from some of Jung’s “types” the Myers Briggs team tested four dichotomous styles of functioning in the Myers-Briggs test: (1) Introversion versus extroversion, (2) sensing versus intuition, (3) Thinking versus feeling, and (4) Judging versus perceiving.

**Introversion versus Extroversion-** introverts derive their energy from the internal world, seeking solitude and tending to have just a few friendships, which are often very deep. In contrast, extroverts get their motivation from the external world. They want interaction with people and have many friendships, some deep and some not. Active and Reflective seem to be the terms that Felder and Henriques (1995) used to describe this personality dichotomy. Accordingly they stated that active learners enjoy doing something in the external world with the information- discussing it or explaining it in some way, and the reflective learners enjoy examining and manipulating introspectively. It has been suggested that introverts and extroverts can learn to work together with the help of the teacher. Enforcing time limits in the L<sub>2</sub> classroom can keep extraverts’ enthusiasm to a manageable level. On the other hand, rotating the person in charge of learning L<sub>2</sub> discussions give introverts the opportunity to participate equally with extraverts.

**Intuition versus Sensation-** Intuition and sensation are the two ways in which people tend to perceive the world. Sensing involves observing, gathering data through the sense: intuition involves indirect perception by way of the subconscious-accessing memory, speculating, imagining. Everyone uses both faculties constantly, but most people tend to favor one over the other (Felder and Henriques, 1995). Sensor-Intuitior differences in language learning have explored by researchers, e.g. Ehramn and Oxford (1990). Intuitive students think in abstract, futuristic, large-scale, and non sequential ways. They like to create theories and new possibilities, often have sudden insights, and prefer to guide their own learning. In contrast, sensing learners are grounded in the here and now. They like facts rather than theories, want guidance and specific instruction from the teacher, and look for consistency. The key to teaching both intuitive and sensing learners is to offer variety and choice, sometimes a highly organized structures for sensing

learners and at other times multiple options and enrichment activities for intuitive students (Oxford, 2003)

**Thinking versus Feeling-** thinking learners want to be viewed as competent and do not tend to offer praise easily-even though they might secretly desire to be praised themselves. They are oriented toward the stark truth, even if it hurts some people's feelings. In comparison, feeling learners value other people in very personal ways. They show empathy and compassion through words, not just behaviors, and say whatever is needed to smooth over difficult situations. Oxford (2003) suggests, L<sub>2</sub> teachers can help thinking learners show greater over compassion to their feeling classmates and can suggest that feeling learners might calm down their emotional expression while working with thinking learners.

**Judging/ Closure-oriented versus Perceiving/Open-** closure oriented learners want to reach judgments or completion quickly and want clarity as soon as possible. These students are serious, hardworking learners who like to be given written information and enjoy specific tasks with deadlines. Sometimes their desire for closure hampers the development of fluency. In contrast, open learners want to stay available for continuously new perceptions and are therefore sometimes called "perceiving." They take second language learning less seriously, treating it like a game to be enjoyed rather than a set of tasks to be completed. Open learners dislike deadlines; they want to have a good time and seem to soak up second language information by osmosis rather than hard effort (Gardner, 1985).

According to Ehrman and Oxford (1989), Open learners are better in developing fluency, but they are at a disadvantage in a traditional classroom setting. Judging and perceiving learners provide a good balance for each other in the second language classroom. The former are the task-driven learners, and the latter know how to make function. Therefore, skilled second language teachers sometimes consciously create cooperative groups that include both types of learners, since there learners can benefit from collaboration with each other.

### 2.3.3 Desired Degree of Generality

This strand contrasts the learner who focuses on the main idea or big picture with the learner who concentrates on details. Many authors who have done research on cognitive or learning styles have noted the importance of this dichotomous pairing, and various terms have been used to describe categories that appear to have points in common such as, for example sequential and global (Felder and Henrique's 1995); field-independent and field-dependent (Witkin and Goodenough 1981); left-brained and right-brained (Kane 1984); etc.

Oxford (1990) proposed that this learning style dimension can be tapped through brain hemisphericity. She cites studies of Leaver (1986) in suggesting that left-brain (analytic) thinkers are better at learning language intonation and rhythms. Analytic learners gravitate towards strategies that involve dissecting words and sentences into component parts and are comfortable with structured teaching approaches that stress grammatical analysis; global learners prefer holistic strategies such as guessing at words and searching for main ideas, and may respond well to relatively unstructured approaches like community learning that might not appeal to analytic learners.

There are also other hypotheses about the role of field-dependence/holistic/ and field independence /analytic/ in second language learning. As Ellis (1985: 114) pointed out, one of the most interesting suggestions is that field-dependence will prove most facilitative in naturalistic second language acquisition, but field independence will lead to greater success in classroom learning. The skills of the field-dependent learner will lead to more frequent contact with native speakers and so to more input, whereas in classroom learning the greater ability to analyze the formal rules of the language will be important. To this end, since a balance between generality and specificity is very useful for second language learning, the global students and the analytic student have much to learn from each other.

## 2.4 Learning Styles in EFL Classroom

It is no surprise that in a field as dynamic as second language teaching there have been a great deal of attention towards the learning style discussion with the emergence of various learning theories. Language learning, as one of the most challenging lifelong pursuits, involves the educational and professional guidance and as well as, personal and systematic engagements. Hence, the personal reflection on how one acquires language could serve as a key to the success of second language learning. That is why Richards and Rodgers (1987:46) mentioned learner styles as one of the major ideas in their review of trends and issues in TESOL in the past twenty years.

However, according to Peacock (2001) the concept of learning styles has aroused a great deal of attention and become the focus of a number of second language studies since Reid's influential work on the topic was published in 1987. Reid's (1987, 1995) two major hypotheses about learning styles which are considered to have formed the background to current studies on the area are:

1. *All students have their own learning styles and learning strengths and weaknesses. Hence, a mismatch between teaching and learning styles causes learning failure, frustration, and demotivation.*
2. *Learning styles (if unchecked) persist regardless of teaching methods and materials; that they can be adaptable because they are partly habit rather than biological attributes; and that learning will be improved if students become aware of a wider range of styles and stretch their own styles.*

In pursuit of Reid's two hypotheses a number of studies into the learning styles of ESL/EFL students reported that learners have their own learning style preferences. For instance, as Felder and Henriques noted, Oxford and her colleagues (i.e. Oxford 1990; Oxford et al. 1991; Wallace and Oxford 1992; Oxford and Ehrman 1993) have extensively studied learning styles in the context of language learning and their results revealed that students have their own preferred learning styles.

Similarly, other researchers claimed that mismatch often occur in ESL classrooms and have bad effects on students' learning and attitude to class and to English language (Reid 1987; Willing 1988). The unfortunate potential consequences of the teaching and learning styles mismatches affect both the teacher and the students. Felder and Henriques (1995:21) describe what would happen to the students and the teacher as follow:

*The students tend to be bored and inattentive in class, do poorly on tests, get discouraged about the course, and may conclude that they are no good at the subject of the course and give up... Instructors, confronted by low test grades, unresponsive or hostile classes, poor attendance, and dropouts, may become overly critical of their students, (making things even worse) or begin to question their own competence as teachers.*

On the contrary, matching teaching and learning styles improves learning, attitudes, behavior, and motivation. It gives all learners an equal chance in the classroom, and builds students self-awareness (Willing 1988; Reid 1996). Such findings underscore the importance of recognizing learners' varying style preferences so as to match learning styles with that of teaching styles.

Yet another dimension of learning style studies revolves around factors which determine a previously particular learning style preference of learners. Brown (1980:90) notes "A person's cognitive styles is determined by the way he internalizes his total environment, and since that internalization process is not strictly cognitive, we find that physical, affective, and cognitive domains merge in cognitive style" It is generally considered that one's learning style will result form personality variables, including psychological and cognitive make-up, socio-cultural background, and educational experience.

## **2.5 Learning Styles and Cultural Background**

A simple process of logical analysis applied to the meaning of the terms culture and learning style, leaves little room for the doubt on the existence of cultural influences in

the development of individual learning preferences. In describing the link between culture and learning styles with reference to students learning, De Vita (2001:5) states,

*...culture, by influencing the way we perceive, organize and process information, the way in which we communicate interact with others and solve problems, and the way we form "mental categories" and retrieve them in order to create patterns which allow us to generate new knowledge by means of previously acquired knowledge, must affect the preferences students have for thinking, relating to others, and particular types of classroom environments and experiences.*

In fact, the hypothesis of a link between culture and learning styles is not new. For instance, Kolb and Fry (1975) cited in De Vita (2001) argued that key agents of socialization such as, for example family, school society, that are clearly important media for the transmission of cultural values and, hence, directly related to culture, influence the development of learning style.

The suggestions of the link between culture and learning style preferences have received the attention of second language researchers in recent years. For instance, Reid investigated perceptual learning styles of ESL students in the United States, and reported the presence of significant differences in learning styles regarding learners' cultural background. (Reid, 1987) Similarly, Peacock (2001) and Mulalic, et al. (2009) applied the perceptual learning style preference questionnaire to determine the learning styles of multi-ethnic ESL students. Results from both studies revealed differences according to the learners' cultural background. Consequently, while making their concluding remarks, Dunn and Griggs (1990) claimed that the differences which were established between the students from different ethnic backgrounds should be reconsidered when teaching foreign languages.

## 2.6 Teaching Styles

The nature of any subject matter is often based on an analysis of the nature of the subject itself and the application of teaching and learning principles draws from research and theory in educational psychology. The result is commonly understood as a teaching method and approach, by which we refer to a set of basic teaching and learning principles together with all classroom practices that are derived from them. Therefore, we can say that teaching styles are made up of the methods and approaches with which teachers feel most comfortable.

In search for more effective ways of teaching, the field of ESL/EFL methods and approaches was characterized by frequent change and innovation in the last five or more decades. Hence, it is no surprise that English teachers have been exposed to so many methods and approaches; starting from the traditional Grammar-Translation method, Direct Method, Audio lingual Method to the more recent communicative language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) approaches (Larsen-Freeman, 2006). As it has been suggested teachers teaching styles are in part derived from the methods and approaches they favored. In line with this, Grasha, (1996: 47) asserted that in developing an individual approach to teaching, a major reference point for the teacher is his/her personal beliefs and principles.

However, in addition to what has been forwarded, other sources of teaching styles could be personally constructed over time based on experiences. Commenting on the possible reasons that provide sources of teachers' teaching plans and instructional decisions, Felder (1993:6) says,

*...in part because teachers tend to favor their own learning styles, in part because they instantly teach the way they were taught in most college classes ... the teaching style in most courses tilt heavily towards the preferences of small percentage of college students*

The literature offers variety of ESL teaching approaches and methods so that teachers have ample opportunity to select and apply based on their preference. However, most of the approaches and methods are full of claims and assertions about how people learn

language, few of which are based on second language acquisition research or have been empirically tested. In trying to apply approaches or methods, teachers may not consider the context in which teaching and learning occurs, including the cultural context, and the context constituted by the teachers and learners in their classroom. (Richards and Rodgers, 2000:248). Commenting on the lack of studies regarding to ESL teachers' teaching styles and their effectiveness with respect to the classroom context, Peacock (2001:92) has the following to say:

*...learning styles and teaching styles, and particularly the match or mismatch between them, are an important and under-researched aspect in second language learning area. There is a theoretical support for the idea that mismatches are common and they negatively affect learning, yet few if any empirical studies have investigated this idea or even researched EFL teachers' teaching styles.*

Attention to teaching and learning styles has been described as part of the desirable trend towards learner centered and needs-based instruction. (James, 2001) Contrary to this, most language instructions are verbal involving predominantly lectures, writing in texts and on chalkboards and audiotapes in language laboratories (Felder and Henriques, 1995). Similarly, Reid (1995) hypothesizes that 90% of teachers' teaching is geared to auditory learners, this being the proportion of teacher talk and discussion.

## **2.7 Multi-Style Teaching Approach in EFL Classrooms**

In line with the discussion of such learning style differences in language classroom in general and in multicultural classroom in particular, an equally significant point of consideration for the teacher is twofold. The first one is taking into account the possibility of mismatch between his/her teaching style and that of the learners' learning styles. The second point is the responsibilities he should be ready to bear in order not to twist and force the learning cycle to his own but to make his options meet that of his learners.

However, when one looks deeply into the teaching practices of teachers, it seems possible to infer that the majority of the teachers are not aware of their students learning styles. The problems arise when teachers are unaware of the need to establish and identify learning styles, and, therefore, when such attitudes persist and result in consequences (Kaplan and Kies, 1995). Obviously, there has been strong concern among scholars to change language teaching curricula and the teaching methods so as to make them meet changing needs of learners. To this end, Kang (1999:24) says,

*Research on learning styles has provided teachers with a different view of learning and demonstrated how to apply it to classroom teaching. Awareness of individual differences in learning has made ESL/EFL educators and program designers more sensitive to their roles in teaching and learning and has permitted them to match teaching and learning styles so as to develop students' potentials in second and foreign language learning.*

The main intention in Kang's description here is that knowledge of learners learning styles provides EFL teachers and course designers boost their roles so as to accommodate their student's preferences in learning the language. Especially, in the context of multicultural classroom teachers should be aware of behavior that is normative and acceptable in various ethnic and cultural groups. Consequently, the teaching style practices in multicultural setting must be both responsive and adaptive to ethnic differences.

When we look into the concept with respect to Ethiopian context, we find certain studies which have been conducted to explore the multicultural education awareness of school and college teachers for example, Firew (2008), and Genene (2008). The result of these studies indicated that the teacher educators in the selected educational institutions had moderate multicultural awareness. They were also found to be poorly competent in performing classroom instruction from the basis of background diversity existed among their respective trainees. On the other hand Mekdes (2006) has investigated the learning styles of ESL students in two schools. Her focus of research was to explore the extent to which the students learning styles match to the lesson plans prepared by teachers. Results

from the study revealed differences between the learning styles of the students and the methodologies indicated in the teachers' lesson plans. The findings of such studies are evidences that teachers need to raise their multicultural awareness so as accommodate the diverse learning styles of students from different ethnic/culture backgrounds. Yet, given the complex nature of multicultural reality of the country, a lot has to be done so as to identify the cultural expectations of multicultural students in different parts of the country so that we can have better opportunity to optimize the teaching styles to be utilized with them.

Consequently, this research was conducted in Gambella Regional State which is located in the western tip of Ethiopia bordering with Sudan in the West, North, the Region of Southern Nations and Nationalities and Peoples' (SNNP) in the South and East with the Region of Oromia in the North and East. This regional state has been selected because of its familiarity to the investigator; and it contains three colleges wherein students from a variety of ethnic backgrounds come to attend their education. According to the revised constitution of the Region cited in Bizuneh (2006), Gambella is the home of five indigenous ethnic groups namely, the Nuer (40%), the Anywaa (27%), Mazenger (6%), Kommo and Oppo consisting 3%. Besides, there are considerable number of people from other parts of the country living in the region, notably Oromo, Amhara, Tigray, Kambatta, Kafecho and others commonly known as "the highlanders".

## **2.8 Models of Learning Styles**

In the last three decades, several models and measurement instruments have been designed to measure learning styles and identify individual learning performances. The most common and widely-used ones are briefly discussed as follows.

### **2.8.1 The Perceptual Learning Style Preferences Model.**

Joy Reid (1987) designed Perceptual Learning style preference Questionnaire (PLSPQ) to measure students preferred learning styles based on how they learn best using their perceptions: visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile preferences, and two social aspects of learning group and individual learning. Reid also classified styles as major, minor, or

negative. In other words, each student has major, minor and negative learning style preferences. Major learning styles indicate that a student could function well as a learner. Minor learning style preferences indicate that a learner still can function well. Negative learning style preferences show that the students may have difficulty in learning

Using the PLSPQ, several researchers demonstrated that ESL students varied significantly in their sensory preferences. For instance, Reid (1987) reported that people from certain cultures differently favored the three different modalities of learning. Accordingly, students from Asian cultures were often highly visual, with Koreans being the most visual, and Hispanic learners were frequently auditory. Other studies such as, for example, Peacock (2001), Mulalic, et al. (2009) have applied the model and reported learning style differences among ethnically heterogeneous students.

### **2.8.2 Learning Style Inventory (LSI) Model**

Kolb's (1976, 1984) model of experiential learning postulates a four stage cyclic structure where concrete experience provides scope for reflective observation that, after a process of abstract-conceptualization, allows for active experimentation to take place. The associated learning style inventory (LSI) measures information-perception orientations on the basis of a learner's preference of concrete experience over abstractness, and information processing orientations on the basis of a learner's preference of action over reflection. According to this inventory, the varying orientations result in four types of learners: divergers whose dominant learning activities are concrete experience and reflective observation; convergers who are best at abstract conceptualization and active experimentation; assimilators whose greatest learning strength are abstract conceptualization and reflective observation; and finally we find accommodators who learn best through concrete experience and active experimentation.

While accepting Kolb's learning cycle model, Honey and Mumford's (1982) expressed dissatisfaction with the effectiveness of the Inventory itself. They criticized the inventory to have poor face validity and questionable accuracy. This led them to develop an alternative instrument called the learning style Questionnaire (LSQ), which identifies

whether someone is predominantly an activist who is better equipped to learn from experience, a reflector who is better equipped to learn from reflective observation, a theorist who learns best from exploring associations and interrelationships between ideas and events, or a pragmatics whose dominant learning activities are those based on doing or trying things that yield practical advantages.

### **2.8.3 Myers Briggs Type Indicator Model**

This is a personality inventory designed to measure a specific theory of psychological types. An individual's personality type as measured by the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) helps determine the way he or she learns or reacts to new information. As it has been discussed in detail in section 2.3.2, the Myers Briggs Type Indicator reveals a learner's preferences along four dimensions: extroversion Vs introversion, sensing Vs intuition, feeling Vs thinking, and Judging Vs perceiving. Combinations of these dimensions lead to sixteen types that are described by the Myers Briggs Type Indicator. These combinations make up the dynamics of personality type which are indicative of learning styles. (Nuby and Oxford, 1996)

Using this instrument, several studies such as, for example, Myers & Mc Caulley (1985), Erhman & Oxford (1989) demonstrated differences in students' learning styles preferences. However, due to its length and high degree of sophistication, the appropriateness of this instrument in situations when learning styles are the key object of inquiry has been questioned by a number of writers (De vita, 2001).

### **2.8.4 Index of Learning Styles (ILS) Model**

Felder and Silverman's learning style model (1988), which was first applied in the context of engineering education, categorized students' preferences in five dimensions. As Felder and Henriques (1995: 22) stated that the proposed learning style dimensions are defined in terms of the answers to the following five questions:

1. *What type of information does the student preferentially perceive: Sensory-Sights, sounds, and physical sensations, or intuitive-memories, ideas, insights?*

2. *Through which modality is sensory information most effectively perceived: Visual- Pictures, diagrams, graphs, demonstrations, or verbal-written and spoken words and formulas?*
3. *How does the student prefer to process information actively-through engagement in physical activity or discussion, or reflectively-through introspection?*
4. *How does the student progress toward understanding: sequentially- in a logical progression of small incremental steps, or globally- in large jumps, holistically?*
5. *With which organization of information is the student most comfortable: inductive-facts and observations are given, underlying principles are inferred, or deductive-principles are given, consequences and applications and deduced?*

The associated Index of Learning style (Felder and Soloman, 1999), is based on a 44-item questionnaire and develops the preference profile of a student or an entire class on the first four learning style dimensions outlined above. The inductive-deductive dimension, which is a perspective on the language learning/acquisition dichotomy, is not assessed by the Index of Learning styles.

No doubt that making any attempt to integrate the varied categorizing dimensions or models of learning styles into a coherent, all-encompassing framework would represent an overly ambitious task. Nevertheless, we can not deny the fact that all these different perspectives do share one underlying rationale which asserts that all students can not be taught in the same way. This, in turn, urges teachers' consideration to take learning style differences among students seriously.

# Chapter Three

## Research Method and Design

As it has been mentioned in the first chapter of this paper the prime objective of the study is to explore the perceptual learning styles used by students, the teaching styles used by their teachers, and the match/mismatch between them in multiethnic ESL classroom. In addition to this the research investigated ESL teacher and student opinions on the impact of the match or mismatch of learning and teaching styles on students' ESL learning. The study applied both qualitative and quantitative method of design. Obviously each method has its own function in collecting and analyzing the data. Thus, the researcher used the quantitative method to obtain the measurable data, i.e. the teaching and learning styles of the sample EFL teachers and students. On the other hand, the qualitative method was used to elicit the information regarding the feelings of the subjects towards the match/mismatch of the styles and its effect on the EFL teaching and learning process in the classroom.

### 3.1. Sources of Data

As it has been indicated in the previous chapters, the researcher conducted this study in Gambella Regional State which is located in the western tip of Ethiopia. The target population of this study was regular undergraduate diploma EFL students and EFL teachers in Gambella Teachers Education College and Openo Technical and Vocational College in the 2008/2009 academic year.

### 3.2. Sampling Design

Since the number EFL teachers is very limited in both sample colleges, all the seven teachers were involved in providing the data. On the other hand, a total of 160 students, i.e. 80 students from each of the two colleges participated in providing the data. Four ethnic groups of the two colleges' student population, namely, the Nuer, the Amhara, the Agnuak, and the Oromo were selected using stratified random sampling. Students from each ethnic group were chosen randomly in the classroom according to their sitting

arrangement. According to the researcher's previous teaching experience and his recent pilot observation in the two colleges, almost all classes are characterized by a composition of students from various ethnic/cultural background like Agnwaks, Tigre, Nuers, Mezengers, Amhara, Oromo, Gurage, etc. Despite the presence of these different groups, subjects were chosen from Agnuak, Oromo, Nuer, and Amhara ethnic groups because the researcher's pilot observation indicated that these four ethnic groups provided sufficient sample size as compared to the others. From the total sample, responses of the Nuer (25%), Oromo (25%), Agnuak (25%), and Amhara (25%) were identified and analyzed.

### **3.3 Data Gathering Instruments**

#### **3.3.1 Questionnaire**

##### **I. Learning Styles**

Data on learning styles were collected from students using an existing and well-tested instrument, Reid's Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire (PLSPQ, 1987). This self-report questionnaire, which is particularly designed for learners of foreign language, assesses preferred learning styles of the students based on how students learn best using their perceptions: Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic, and Tactile preferences, and two social aspects of learning: Group and Individual preferences. In addition to this, Reid (1995) classified styles as *Major*, *Minor*, or *Negative*. Major is a preferred learning style, Minor is one which learners can still function well, and Negative means they have difficulty learning.

There are several reasons behind choosing this instrument: it is easy to administer, it is easy to interpret, it is relatively quick to administer and complete, it has easily reportable scales, and it has reliability and validity supported by the research (Peacock, 2001). Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire (PLSPQ) consists of 30 self-report questions. Subjects are expected to indicate how much they agree with each item on a scale from 1 to 5 when they learn English. Each number notes certain measurement such as: (5) strongly agree (4) agree, (3) undecided, (2) disagree, and (1) strongly disagree.

The questionnaire consist five statements for each preference. An example statement from the PLSPQ is given below for each:

**Visual learners** prefer seeing words or ideas in writing, e.g. reading handouts or the chalkboard. "I learn better by reading than by listening to someone."

**Auditory learners** prefer listening, e.g. oral explanations, discussion, or debates. "I learn better in class when I listen to someone."

**Kinesthetic learners** prefer active participation or experiences, e.g. drama, role-play, or moving around. "I prefer to learn by doing something in class."

**Tactile learners** prefer hands-on work, e.g. handling materials or taking notes. "I learn more when I make something for a class project."

**Group learners** prefer studying with others; group interactions help them learn. "In class, I learn best when I work with others."

**Individual learners** prefer studying alone, e.g. self-directed study or independent reading and study. "In class, I work better when I work alone."

The required orientation was given to the participants and examples were shown on how to complete the questionnaire.

## II. Teaching Styles

Data on language teaching styles were collected using a modified version of the PLSPQ. Teachers were asked about their teaching styles, using the same six categories as the student form. They were expected to respond to each statement as it applied to their teaching of English using a different five point scale *always/often/sometimes/rarely/never*. If they rated a style "5" they always use it in class; "3" meant they sometimes use it; "1" meant they never use it in their classroom teaching. The rating scale here was changed into frequency. This helped the researcher to obtain information as to how frequently each teaching style was used in the teachers' classroom mode of delivery. Teaching styles were then classified as Major, Minor, or Negative, using the same scoring procedure as the student questionnaire.

### **3.3.2 Interview**

While most scholars are aware of threats to the validity of their research posed by the application of elicitation devices, in many instances, interview is one of the most important practical means whereby relevant data can be obtained. In describing the unique features and advantages of semi-structured interview, Nunan (1992:149) says, “In a semi-structured interview the interviewer does not enter the interview with a list of predetermined questions. Topics and issues rather than questions determine the course of the interview ... Because of its flexibilities; the semi-structured interview has found favor with many researchers.” Hence in line with the nature of semi-structured interview, issues which guide the course of the interview to get relevant data for the achievement of the research objectives have been identified as follow:

- ☞ Discussing about the preferred learning/teaching styles.
- ☞ Talking about their feelings towards the match/mismatch of the learning and teaching styles.
- ☞ Discussing about the effects of the match /mismatch of teaching and learning styles on ESL learning and teaching.
- ☞ Talking about the possible sources/origins the preferred learning/teaching styles.

### **3.4. Data Analysis**

In this study, both quantitative and qualitative data analysis were applied. Descriptive statistics was calculated for all questionnaire data, and comparison was made between learning styles and teaching styles. In other words, the data gathered through the questionnaire was tailed, tabulated, and the frequency counts were changed in to percentage. The data were reported through narrative description. The qualitative data analysis was used to analyze the information obtained by the interview. Finally, a description of the findings, conclusions and recommendations were made based on the information collected using the above instruments of data gathering.

# Chapter Four

## Analysis and Discussion of the Findings

As it has been pointed out, this study applied both quantitative and qualitative research methods to elicit and analyze the relevant data. Thus, descriptive statistics, particularly percentage and mean were calculated for the students' version of the questionnaire. Further analysis was also made to test the mean score variations of students grouped according to their ethnic backgrounds. More over all statistical findings are followed by narrative descriptions. Hence, the first part of this chapter displays the statistical findings of the students and the teachers' responses to the questionnaire. The next part provides the analysis to the responses of the interview. At the end, discussion is made on the findings of the questionnaire and the interview with regard to the interview.

### 4.1 Analysis of Students' Perceptual Learning Styles

Table 1 shows results from the student version of the perceptual learning style preference Questionnaire.

Style	Mean	Type
Visual	13.07	Minor
Auditory	15.00	Major
Kinesthetic	14.38	Major
Tactile	11.21	Negative
Group	12.98	Minor
Individual	14.52	Major

Note: Mean score 13.5 and above=Major learning style preference

Mean score 11.5 to 13.49= Major learning style preference

Mean score 11.49 or less = Negative learning style preference

Table 1 indicates that Auditory, kinesthetic, and Individual were Major learning styles; visual and Group were minor learning styles, and Tactile was Negative learning style.

According to the mean score for each learning style, learners in the current study favored Auditory (15.00), Kinesthetic (14.38), and Individual (14.52) as their major learning style preferences. Their minor learning style preferences were towards Visual (13.07) and Group (12.98) learning styles, while they had negative preferences towards Tactile (11.21) learning style. Auditory and Individual styles were indicated as students major learning preferences. These preferences could be the result of students' high school learning background. Most of the high school teachers' seem to prefer to teach by giving notes and lectures so that students work and study individually.

The following tables have been provided in order to demonstrate each perceptual learning style individually and to show how students responded to each statement in the questionnaire.

**Table 2 shows students' Visual Learning Style Preferences**

<b>Question Item</b>	<b>SA (%)</b>	<b>A (%0</b>	<b>U (%)</b>	<b>D (%)</b>	<b>SD (%)</b>
6. I learn better by reading what the teacher writes on the chalkboard	20.3	50.4	10.2	8.5	5.6
10. When I read instructions, I remember them better	81.1	49.0	11.40	17.2	4.3
12. I understand better, when I read instruction	20.0	50.0	9.4	12.4	8.2
24. I learn better by reading than by listening to someone.	20.4	40.1	14.5	15.0	10.00
29. I learn more by reading textbook than by listening to lectures.	18.2	22.4	20.3	26.1	13.00

Table 2 indicates Visual style is favored by students that 20.3% and 50.4% strongly agree and agree respectively that they understand better from what the teacher is writing on the chalkboard. Similarly, 18.1% and 50% of the students strongly agree and agree that when they read instructions they remember them better. Overall result of the survey indicates Visual style is minor learning style preference of the students. Accordingly, we can say that learners can handle activities in the classroom when the teacher is visual in presenting the material. These students benefit more if the teaching is supported by diagrams, sketches, flow charts, or any other visual representation of course material. Besides, they should be advised to help themselves using different mechanisms, for example, color-code their notes with a highlighter so that everything relating to one topic is the same color.

The visual style preferences of students seem to have attributed to the fact that the majority of the students have the experience of copying structured notes for personal reading. Hence, they may expect their college instructors also to provide them with handouts and to give them notes on the chalkboard.

**Table 3 shows students' Auditory Learning Style Preferences**

<b>Question Item</b>	<b>SA (%)</b>	<b>A (%)</b>	<b>U (%)</b>	<b>D (%)</b>	<b>SD (%)</b>
1. I find it useful to read out loud when reading the text book.	20.2	28.3	20.6	19.4	11.5
7. I would rather listen to lecture than read the textbook	30.3	49.4	12.0	10.0	6.3
9. I remember things I have heard in the class better than the things I have read	33.0	37.5	10.5	13.0	6.0
17. I learn better in the class when teacher gives a lecture	37.5	40.0	14.0	6.0	2.2
20. I learn better in class when I listen to someone	25.0	50.3	11.0	9.7	4.0

As we can see from Table 3, the majority of the student 37.5% and 40% strongly agree and agree that they learn better in the classroom when the teacher gives a lecture. Similarly, 69.5% of the students indicated that they remember things they have heard in the classroom better than the things they have read. According to the mean score, overall for Auditory style, students expressed major learning preference. Consequently, these students benefit more if the teacher's mode of delivery is supported by audio-tapes, lectures, and class discussions. They can be also advised to facilitate their learning by themselves using different means such as reading aloud or moving their lips as they read, teaching other students, and conversing with their teacher.

**Table 4 shows students' Kinesthetic learning style preferences**

Question Item	SA (%)	A (%)	U (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
2. I prefer to learn by doing exercise and drills in the class.	32.4	50.20	9.30	4.00	4.10
8. when I do things in class, I learn better	35.20	49.20	6.20	8.40	1.00
16. I benefit more from computer lab classes than lecture classes	24.10	32.00	19.20	21.20	3.50
19. I understand better things in class when I participate in role-playing.	21.60	36.4	27.00	12.00	3.00
26. I learn best in class when I can participate in related activates	28.40	51.40	9.10	9.00	2.10

As Table 4 shows the majority of the students 32.4% and 50.2% strongly agree that they prefer to learn by doing exercises and drills in the class which is one of the main characteristics of kinesthetic learners. Similarly, 79.8% of the students indicated that they learn best when they can participate in related activities. As the information in the survey revealed, students preferred kinesthetic style as one of their major learning style

preferences. Hence, the learning of these students can be facilitated when the teacher uses activities, field trips, and role-plays which increase students' active participation.

**Table 5 shows students' Tactile Learning style Preferences**

<b>Question Item</b>	<b>SA (%)</b>	<b>A (%)</b>	<b>U (%)</b>	<b>D (%)</b>	<b>SD (%)</b>
11. I learn more when I can make a model of something.	14.1	25.00	29.0	19.4	12.4
14. I learn more when I make something for a class project	13.4	24.0	28.3	20.2	14.10
16. I learn better, when I make drawings as I study	13.00	23.20	30.4	19.4	13.00
22. when I build something, I remember what I have learned better	14.10	20.00	31.00	17.2	17.70
25. I enjoy making something for a class project	11.30	24.10	29.2	20.2	15.20

According to Table 5, Tactile style was not favored by the students compared to other modes of learning. Out of the total sample respondents, only 14.1% of the students indicated they strongly agree that they learn more when they can make model of something. Similarly, only 11.3% of the students enjoy making something for a class project. As we can see from the table, most of the students were undecided regarding the Tactile learning style when compared to other modes of learning styles. The mean score of the result revealed that students had negative learning preference towards Tactile style.

**Table 6 shows students' Group Learning style Preference**

<b>Question Item</b>	<b>SA (%)</b>	<b>A (%)</b>	<b>U (%)</b>	<b>D (%)</b>	<b>SD (%)</b>
3. I get more work done when I work with others.	18.0	39.4	24.4	19.1	9.1
4. I learn more when I study with a group	17.4	30.8	19.3	25.7	7.8
5. In class I learn best when I study with others.	16.0	40.3	22.5	14.7	4.5
21. I enjoy working on assignments with two or more classmates	23.6	44.0	13.4	13.3	5.7
23. I prefer to study with others	18.5	29.5	20.1	21.9	10.00

From the above table, we can see that 18% and 31.4% of the respondents strongly agree and agree respectively that they get more work done when they work with others. Similarly, 23.6% of the students strongly agree that they enjoyed working on assignments with two or more classmates. Overall, as the information in the survey indicated, Group style was found to be students' minor learning style preference. Consequently, in order to enhance the learning of such students and to help them remember information better, the teachers' mode of delivery should include tasks which promote group interaction inside and outside the classroom.

**Table 7 Shows students' Individual learning style preferences**

<b>Question Item</b>	<b>SA (%)</b>	<b>A (%)</b>	<b>U (%)</b>	<b>D (%)</b>	<b>SD (%)</b>
13. When I study alone, I understand better.	33.2	44.2	11.4	10.2	1.0
18. When I work alone, I learn better	25.10	43.00	12.1	14.1	5.7
27. In class, I work better when I work alone.	27.4	34.0	16.2	15.4	7.0
28. I prefer working on project by myself	19.5	31.4	20.0	19.4	9.9
30. I prefer to work by myself	26.1	43.0	19.1	8.0	3.80

The result from Table 7 demonstrates that 33.2% and 44.2% of the students strongly agree and agree respectively that they understand better when they study alone. Similarly, 64.1% of the respondents stated that they prefer to work by themselves. From the mean score of the survey, we see that students expressed favor towards Individual style as one of their major learning style preferences. Hence, teachers' modes of delivery which are prepared in a way that enables to work individually can help students to think better and to make better progress in their leaning.

**Table 8 shows the mean score of students learning style Preferences in relation to their ethnic background**

Style	Nuer		Agnuak		Amhara		Oromo		F. Prob
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std.Dev.	Mean	Std.Dev.	
Visual	13.65	3.689	14.00	4.322	14.62	3.534	14.40	3.024	.041
Auditory	14.60	3.233	15.12	3.837	15.17	2.632	15.15	3.441	.161
Kinesthetic	16.27	2.271	16.00	2.522	13.25	4.435	12.00	3.922	.012
Tactile	12.64	2.132	12.00	3.248	12.30	4.484	12.10	4.700	.102
Group	14.62	3.323	15.50	4.618	13.72	4.299	12.12	5.922	.023
Individual	13.15	4.729	13.39	4.166	15.72	5.211	15.53	5.623	.010

As we can see from the table there are statistically significant differences in the mean scores of students leaning styles with regard to their ethnic background. With the exception of Auditory and Tactile styles ( $p > .05$ ), the mean scores and probability value ( $p < .05$ ) justified statistically significant relationship between ethnic background of the sample students and their perceptual learning style preferences. Moreover, the Nuer and the Agnwa students preferred Group style as their major preference and Individual style as minor preference. On the other hand, the Amhara and the Oromo students had major preferences towards Individual style and minor preferences towards Group style.

The main differences were observed in the students' preferences towards Kinesthetic, Group, and Individual styles. Since the Agnwa and the Nuer students have a collective way of life in their culture, they have no difficulty to and to study in group. On the other hand, the Amhara and the Oromo students have come from a culture which is characterized by an individual way of life. As a result, they prefer Individual learning style to Group learning style.

## 4.2 Analysis of Teacher's Responses to the Questionnaire

Table 9 shows the mean score results of teachers' perceptual Teaching style preferences.

Style	Mean	Type
Visual	12.28	Minor
Auditory	14.90	Major
Kinesthetic	14.40	Major
Tactile	11.47	Negative
Group	14.67	Major
Individual	12.28	Minor

Note: 13.5 and above= Major teaching style preference

11.5 to 13.49= Minor teaching style preference

11.49 Or less= Negative teaching style preference

According to the mean score for each teaching style, teachers in this study had preferences towards Auditory (14.90), Kinesthetic (14.40), and Group (14.67) as their major teaching styles. Their minor teaching style preferences were Individual (12.28), Visual (12.28), modes of delivery, while they had negative preferences towards Tactile teaching style. Since the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is currently advocated as the best method in most methodology classes, most teachers seem to prefer Group and Kinesthetic teaching to create communicative classroom environment.

**Table 10** shows the variations around the mean scores of students learning styles and teachers teaching styles.

Style	Students		Teachers		F. Prob.
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation	
Visual	13.07	3.323	12.28	.951	.041
Auditory	15.00	1.632	14.90	.742	.162
Kinesthetic	14.38	4.221	14.40	.971	.012
Tactile	11.21	3.436	11.47	1.988	.102
Group	12.98	4.132	14.67	1.272	.023
Individual	14.52	3.271	12.28	1.253	.010

As we can see from table 10, most of the differences between the teachers and students mean scores considered to be statistically significant. Accordingly, both teachers and students had major preferences towards Auditory Style with no significant difference ( $p = .162 > .05$ ); minor preferences towards Visual style with significant difference ( $p = .041 < .05$ ); and negative preferences towards Tactile style with no significant difference ( $p = .102 > .05$ ). On the other hand, there are statistically significant differences between students and teachers Kinesthetic ( $p = .012 < .05$ ), Group ( $p = .023 < .05$ ), and Individual ( $p = .010 < .05$ ) mean scores. In relative terms, the standard deviations of students in all styles are larger than the teachers' standard deviations. Hence, this relative great amount of dispersions or variations of mean score distribution indicates that the students are heterogeneous

### 4.3 Analysis of Student's Responses to the Interview

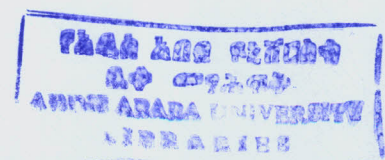
Hence, semi-structured interview is one of the research tools used in this study to collect information. In line with the nature of semi-structured interview, the researcher of the current study has identified issues which guide the course of the interview to get relevant data for the achievement of the research objectives. Hence, the interview with the sample respondents was revolved around the following five issues:

- ☞ Discussing about the sample student's preferred learning styles.
- ☞ Discussing about their ESL teachers' teaching approach
- ☞ Talking about their attitudes toward the match/mismatch of their learning styles and the teachers teaching styles.
- ☞ Discussing about the effects of the match /mismatch of teaching and learning styles on the students' ESL learning.
- ☞ Talking about the possible sources/origins of students' preferred learning styles.

As it has been indicated earlier, the researcher applied stratified random sampling technique to select five (N=5) interviewees from each of the four ethnic groups: Agnywak, Oromo, Nuer, and Amhara and, hence twenty (N=20) students have participated in the interview. Besides, attempt has been done to make the composition from both colleges proportional by choosing ten (N=10) students each from Gambella Teachers Education College, and Openo Technical and Vocational College. With the intention of avoiding peer dominance while the discussion is conducting, the researcher met one interviewee at a time to elicit the personal responses of each learner with regard to the aforementioned issues.

The other important point that must be mentioned is that the researcher has briefed each interviewee about the ultimate goal of the study by raising points related to the concept of learning and teaching styles in EFL multicultural classroom. The introduction was found useful to avoid potential misunderstandings and confusion, and to elicit as genuine information as possible from the sample respondents.

In order to lead the interviewees to the next important and relevant issues, the interview began with the discussion about their preferred learning styles although they have already taken part in responding to the perceptual learning style preference questionnaire. The sample students were asked how they prefer to learn English in the classroom. In order to make the concept of learning preference easy to the students and to avoid possible



confusion in understanding and answering the question, examples were provided such as, for example, taking notes for personal reading (which are identified as visual learning style in the perceptual learning style preference questionnaire), listening to lectures (Auditory style), participating in pair and group works (group style), doing exercise and studying alone (individual styles), participating in role-plays, dramas and related activities (kinesthetic style), etc .

Hence, 30% (N=6) of the respondents said that they prefer their teachers to teach them using activities which promote in class discussions like pair and group work. In justifying the reason for their preferences, one of the students says:

*Whenever we are told to form group or to be in pair to discuss a given topic, I do not feel bored, and I do not know how the class comes to end. It is relaxing and enjoyable to discuss in English with my classmates. If there is something difficult we can invite the teacher in the middle of our discussion to help us. Mostly, I get more understanding and better memory of what we discussed. But if I simply sit down and listen to what the teacher talks, I may get bored.*

Other students gave different reasons for their preference that classroom discussions increased them opportunity to use the language practically so as to develop the speaking and listening skills, and to build their confidence in using the language inside and out side the classroom.

Key terms mentioned in the statements of the above responses can be used as indicators to place the learning preferences of the students in the six categories of the perceptual learning styles. Hence, we can say that these students had learning preferences towards Group, Kinesthetic, and Auditory styles. It is worth mentioning that out of the above six respondents who favored learning through discussions, five of them were native or Nuer and Agnwak learners. As it has been indicated in the analysis of the questionnaire, these two ethnic groups students expressed major learning preference towards the above there styles.

On the other hand, 40% (N=8) of the interviewees claimed that copying notes and listening to the teachers' explanation are effective ways of learning to understand and remember the subject matter better. In line with this, one of the students says, "When teachers lecture in the classroom. I understand and learn new grammar items easily and the notes I copied help me to read or study alone outside the classroom." Out of the eight students in this category, six of them were "highlander" students from Amhara and Oromo ethnic groups.

When comparing the native students, i.e. Nuer and Agnuak to the "highlander" or Amhara and Oromo ethnic students, they have better exposure to use English as SL outside the classroom. Since, the area was under the colony of Great Britain for some time, it is common to observe indigenous people communicate each other in English language. As a result, the native students have better access to use the language in the community than the other ethnic groups or "highlanders" students who communicate in languages other than English outside the classroom. This contextual factor seems to have developed the confidence of Agnuak and Nuer students in using the language which was reflected in their preference towards classroom discussions.

As mentioned earlier, out of the eight students preferred learning by taking notes and listening lectures, six of them were "highlander" students or Amhara and Oromo ethnic groups in the context of this study. In terms of the perceptual learning style preference questionnaire, the students can be identified as Visual, Auditory, and Individual learners. It is in agreement to the analysis of the questionnaire which revealed major preference of Amhara and Oromo ethnic group students towards the above three styles in the responses of the students' towards the above three styles. In the responses of the students there were repetitions of taking notes and listening to lectures on grammar items. This implies that "highlander" learners give more attention to the structure parts than the language skills in their EFL learning. In his teaching experience in one of the sample colleges, the researcher has noted that "highlander" students including Oromo and Amhara ethnic groups been more interested in studying the structure of the language than the native or Nuer and Agnuak students. Nevertheless, most of these students did not apply their

grammar knowledge to communicate in the language which was reflected in their reluctance to participate in classroom discussions. In general, it is possible to say that “highlander” students use English only for academic purpose where as native learners use it both for academic purpose in schools, and for communicative purpose in their society.

The remaining sample interviewee forwarded a different view about the learning style preferences. As to him, “There are no specific ways of learning which I like or dislike. Whether I learn through discussion, lecture, or group work, it does not affect my learning. What is more important for me is how the teacher teachers effectively by using these methods.”

The response of the student suggests the fact that EFL teachers’ ability in using a given mode of teaching effectively can play a significant role in shaping the students’ learning style preference. In other words, if a teacher applies, for instance, group activities in a way that motivates and attracts the learners, they are likely to develop positive attitude towards group activities.

The second point of discussion the interviewees were asked if their English teachers teach them in a way they prefer to learn. Accordingly, for 70% (N=14) of the interviewees it was “frequent” experience to learn in a way which does not encourage and motivate their effort in learning English. The rest 30% (N=6) of the respondents replied that they “sometimes” encounter English teachers who use teaching approach that does not agree to their learning expectation. The students were further asked to describe the teaching styles which did not encourage them with respect to their learning style preferences. One of the sample students says.

*For example, I told you that I enjoy and learn when I participate in discussion. But some English teachers spend half of the period by writing notes on the black board, and half of the period by explaining what they write. I remember one of my teachers used to give us notes almost every period. He never starts his explanation until most students finish their writing. If I finish early, I sit with out doing anything. At the end of the class he may give us few minutes to ask questions. I don't like such classes because I feel bored to write notes and to listen to the teacher always.*

The above description of the interviewee and the responses of other respondents indicate that students can have negative attitude towards a mode of delivery which is used consistently by their teachers. As a matter of fact, we all need changes and varieties when we do things. The same is true in the case of classroom teaching and learning practices. The sample students expressed preferences towards certain learning styles. However it was also indicated that they may not always benefit simply because the teacher teaches according to their preferences.

According to the responses, when their preferred learning styles are used repeatedly without change they begin to lose interest in attending the class and their learning become “uninspiring.” on the other hand, when teachers do not manipulate the styles skillfully, the students may not be able to make use of the styles.

The sample students forwarded their feelings when the teacher’s teaching approach differs to their preferred learning styles. 75% (N=15) of the respondents claimed they felt “unhappy”, “discouraging”, and “lost interest” to attend the class. One of the interviewee, who was a third year student, told what he had felt when attending his first year English class.

*The class was completely different from my high school experience. There was often group discussion and we were expected to stand in front of the class to present the result I was always worried to attend the class because each are of us might be asked suddenly to say something. Finally, I begun to lose interest and confidence in learning English I spent the whole semester being unhappy and frustrated*

From the description of the sample student, we understand that students can be nervous and frustrated when they confront unfamiliar teaching styles the above respondent had not experience in learning in an interactive way which demands students’ participation is pain, group and other classroom discussions. Besides, the classroom approach of the

teacher was not encouraging and supportive to help the student adjust his previous learning style to the new one by taking risks and tolerating ambiguity.

Generally, the responses of the sample students show that teachers' classroom practices have an impact on the feelings of students. Especially, whenever teachers are not systematic and encouraging in applying a given mode of delivery which is not familiar or even uncomfortable to students, it may upset and inhibit the students' involvement. The rest of the interviews implies that the effectiveness of the teacher in using a given method or the text to which it contributes to the development of students' whole personality, including the affective domain.

One of the worth mentioning points observed is the responses of the sample students is that the mismatch between their teaching and learning styles was not the sole reason for the feelings of disappointment and frustration. They expressed similar feelings to the classroom behavior of teachers in using a given teaching style. In other words, students are not comfortable with teachers who do not give advice, assistance, and support, especially when the teaching approach is different from their preferred learning styles.

On the other hand, 15% (N=3) of them replied that they tried their best to adjust themselves to the teachers' teaching style even though they do not like the way the teacher teaches. One of these interviewees said, "In order to pass the exam I have to do what the teacher wants me to do. Sometimes I succeed, sometimes not." The rest 10% (N=2) of the learners believe that teachers know the 'what' and 'how' to teach of the subject matter so that they do not have special feeling whatever teaching style is being used by the teacher. These students think that learners do not have the educational status to criticize and to feel happy or unhappy as to how a given topic is presented.

The sample students were asked whether their EFL learning has been affected as the result of the match or mismatch between the teaching and learning styles. Accordingly all the sample students claimed that teachers' teaching ability in accordance with the preferred learning styles of students is the major factor that determines success of EFL

the success of their EFL learning. In line with the above claim, 65% (N=13) of the respondents stated that they performed 'little' or 'nothing' in their results. With this regard; one of the respondents says the following:

*It was difficult for me to adjust myself to the teaching methods of the teacher at the time. I did not like the way he teachers so I was not participating in group and other directions. He was always warning the class to be active participant to get good result. I felt I was not really learning. Since I was not motivated to learn I scored poor result at the end.*

On the other hand, 35% (N=7) of the interview as responded that their success in learning the language was not that much affected because they made effort to adjust themselves to the teaching styles of the teachers. Some of the statements made by the students are:

- ☞ *"I try to find someone outside the class to guide and help me."*
- ☞ *"I like to learn in different ways so I adjust myself of to the new teaching style, but it may sometimes take long time."*
- ☞ *I spend much time to study again and again outside the classroom.*

The responses of the sample students revealed that the success of students in learning English language can be promoted or inhibited by the extent to which the teachers preferred approach to teaching is aligned to the students learning styles preferences. Moreover, the teachers' classroom behavior, the rapport between the teacher and the students, and the way the preferred mode of delivery is used contribute a lot in arousing or deterring learners' motivations interest in learning. EFL one of the most important

Finally, the sample students were asked to suggest on the sources/origins of their preferred learning styles. Hence, 35% (N=7) of the respondents think that their preferred learning styles are the result of their family and peer group influence. For the 45% (N=9) of the sample students, in addition to their family influence, they think their high school learning experience plays its own role in shaping their learning styles. The rest 20%

(N=4) of the interviewees said they have no idea how and when they developed their learning style preferences.

From the responses of the majority of the students, family and educational backgrounds are mentioned as the possible cause for the development of their learning styles. Hence, we can understand that cultural and educational contexts that govern how a given ethnic/culture group should behave and communicate play a significant role in shaping the general behavior of members of the society. This, in turn influences the way how each children grown up, how they acquire information, and how they interact with people. The combination of all these backgrounds obviously seems to take a lions share in shaping students' preferred approach to learning.

#### **4.4 Analysis of Teachers' Responses to the Interview**

Similar to the students' interview, the researcher applied semi-structured interview to elicit information from the sample EFL teachers of both selected colleges. Hence, two EFL teachers from Openo Technical and Vocational College and five EFL teachers from Gambella Teachers Education and Health Science College have taken part in responding to the interview. Concerning to the educational background of the teachers, six of them are graduates of BA degree in teaching English and the other one has completed his MA degree in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). In order to guide the course of the interview the following five topics have been identified:

- ☞ Discussing about the teachers preferred teaching styles
- ☞ Discussing about the sources/ origins of their teaching styles
- ☞ Talking about their students' learning style preferences
- ☞ Discussing about teaching EFL in multi-ethnic/culture classroom
- ☞ Discussing about effects of the match/mismatch of teaching and learning styles on the teaching/ learning process.

Hence, the sample respondents were invited to talk about their preferred teaching approaches and all of agreed that they have their own preferred approach to the teaching

of English. Therefore, teaching by giving short notes and lectures has been mentioned as the preferred style in the response of 28.5% of the interviewees. In justifying the reason, one of the sample teachers said, “I think most students developed learning styles from high school experiences and expect to be spoon-fed with highly structured notes together with model examples. Therefore, in order to help their learning I give notes before or after lecture.”

On the other hand, 43% of the respondents replied that they usually prefer to create interactive classroom by using pair or group discussions, and role-play in the classroom. The reason for these teachers was “to facilitate the communicative ability of the students in using the language, students should be encouraged to interact in the classroom through pair and group discussion.”

The rest 28.5% of the teachers claimed they usually apply both lecture and discussion methods depending up on the nature of a given lesson or topic. According to these respondents, the grammar part of the language for example, is best presented using lecture method whereas the language skills are better taught through practical activities like pair/group works.

In relation to their preferred teaching approaches, the interviewees were asked to forward their feelings about the possible sources/origins of their teaching styles. 47% the respondents replied that they think their preferred teaching styles are the result of their previous teaching experience. On the other hand, 28.5% of the teachers believe that they are applying what they have learned in their pre-service university education. For the rest 28.5%, the teaching styles are favored and applied according to their relevance in presenting different topics effectively.

From the above responses of the sample teachers, we can conclude that teachers have a tendency to stick to one or two approaches to the teaching of English. Besides, as the responses reveal, the students’ learning style preferences was not mentioned as one of the reasons that guide the selection of teachers’ instructional approaches.



The next discussion revolved around issues related to the learning style preference of the students. Accordingly, the sample teachers were asked if they had ever assessed their students' learning styles using a standard instrument. All the respondents admitted that

They had never evaluated the learning style preferences of their learners using a standard tool. However, 53% of the interviewees said that their teaching experience played a significant role in choosing the best teaching approaches which attract their learners' interest in learning English. On the other hand, 21.5% of the respondents believed that the learning styles of students can be assessed and determined in terms of the effectiveness of the teaching approaches in presenting a given topic. The rest 21.5% claimed that learning styles can not be exactly determined unless measured by a standard tool.

As the responses of the sample teachers confirmed, almost all EFL teachers do not regard evaluating the students' learning styles as part of their teaching. Even though the teachers are aware of the existence of various learning styles in the classroom, they tried to identify those using techniques other than the standard multi-dimensional instruments. With this regard, Mulalic, et al. (2009:101) claimed that without evaluation, even experienced teachers may misinterpreted students' behaviors such as hyperactivity or inattentiveness. Hence, the need to assess the learning styles of students becomes obvious in order to accommodate different learners.

The sample EFL teachers were invited to share their experience in teaching multi-ethnic groups of students. Hence, concerning to the similarities or differences of diverse students' learning behaviors, 85.7% of the responses indicated that learners from different ethnic groups do not show similar learning behavior. Some of these respondents further explained that most of the time students who have the same ethnic background exhibit similar learning behavior in the classroom. On the other hand, 14.3% of the respondents claimed that despite the possibility of such similarities, it is difficult to generalize that a given ethnic group always share same learning preference.

In relation to the above issue, the teachers replied as to how they address the diverse learning style needs of multi-ethnic groups in their classroom. Accordingly, 71.5% of the respondents said they tried to use teaching approaches which they think motivate and

Attract the majority of the class. The rest 28.5% of the interviewees claimed that they varied their instructional approaches to accommodate the differences of multi-ethnic students' learning styles. Nevertheless, all the sample teachers admitted that they do not exactly know the specific learning styles of each ethnic group and, hence can not know whether there is alignment between their teaching approaches and the students learning style preferences.

Concerning the effects of the mismatch between the teaching and learning styles, all respondents agreed that mismatch can negatively affect both the teachers and students effectiveness in the classroom. Further explanation of the teachers confirmed whenever the students do not like mode of delivery they become inattentive, passive, and unhappy which was finally reflected in their poor results. They also claimed that the mismatch has negative impact on their teaching. According to the teachers' responses, unless, students are present physically, mentally and emotionally in the classroom, it is hardly possible to conduct successful teaching and learning.

#### **4.5 Discussion of the Results**

As it has been pointed out in the introduction part of this paper, the prime objective of this study was to explore the alignment between the teachers' styles preferences and the students' preferred learning styles in multi-ethnic EFL classroom. Besides, it was intended to identify the learning style preferences of students who are from different ethnic-groups. Hence, the overall information from the survey indicated that there are significant differences between the teachers' preferred teaching approaches and the students learning style preferences. Concerning the students' perceptual learning style preferences, Auditory, kinesthetic, and Individual styles were found to be the students' major style preferences. Their minor preferences were towards Visual and Group learning styles, while they had negative preference towards Tactile style. On the other hand,

results revealed that teachers had major preferences towards Auditory and Group styles, minor preferences towards Visual, kinesthetic, and individual styles; and negative preference towards Tactile style. With regard to teachers, Auditory and Group styles were found to be their major preferences, while visual, kinesthetic, and individual were their minor teaching style preferences.

Results from the interview analysis indicated that teachers do not apply standard tools in order to determine their students preferred learning styles. As a result, mismatches often occur between the teachers' teaching styles and the students' learning style preferences. It was also indicated that the mismatch affects the students' success in learning the language.

Significant differences in learning styles of ESL students among Agnwak, Oromo, Nuer and Amhara were also investigated. Significant differences were found in some learning styles among students from different ethnic background. Visual and kinesthetic learning styles were preferred way of learning for Agnwak and Nuer students. Amhara and Oromo learners expressed minor preference for these learning styles, Group style was negative learning style for Oromo and Amhara learners; while Nuer and Agnwak students preferred as minor and major learning styles respectively. Individual style was indicated as minor preference for Agnwak students, while the other ethnic-groups preferred it as their major learning styles.

Given the markedly various learning styles present in such a class, the easy option would be that of using multi-style approach to teaching. Visual learners, for instance, may prefer reading, observing, and more visual aids, such as pictures, movies, graphs. Auditory learners prefer more listening to the lectures and participating in discussions. Group oriented students acquire knowledge best when they work with other students. Class interaction is a key for the success of these students. Learners who favored individual style learn best when they work alone. Information is best acquired when these students are left alone to think and work on any task.

Of course, multi-style mode of delivery is about careful and considerate design which must be flexible enough to account for the learning styles' variations exhibited by each unique ethnic-group. Otherwise, it would be irresponsible simply to throw different activities at a group on the assumption that their learning styles will be different. Without systematic assessment, learning styles variations can not be assumed even by experienced teachers. Therefore, we have to evaluate first the learning styles of our students so as to allow some degree of congruent between the teaching and learning styles.

# Chapter Five

## Conclusions and Recommendations

### 5.1 Conclusions

As a matter of fact, matching teaching styles to learning styles is considered to be one of the determinant factors to promote the academic achievement, attitudes, and behavior of students in any educational institution. The findings of this study, however, revealed differences between the teaching styles of EFL teachers and the learning styles of students under investigation. There were also learning style preference variations among different ethnic groups of students. Besides, results indicated that there was lack of awareness in identifying styles using standard instruments. Consequently, the teaching and learning process was characterized by frequent mismatches and, hence negatively affected the effectiveness of students in learning the language.

As a result, since variations are indicated between the teaching and learning styles, and among the learning style preferences of students from different ethnic groups, these differences should be considered in teaching the language as well as in designing EFL materials. Generally, it seems inevitable for EFL teachers to assess their students learning preferences so as to move towards a multi style teaching approach which addresses the diverse learning styles likely to co-exist in a multicultural context.

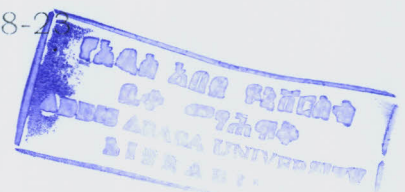
## 5.2 Recommendations

In line with the findings of the study, the following suggestions are forwarded to alleviate problems related to the match or mismatch between teaching and learning style preferences in a multicultural ESL classroom.

- EFL teachers need to consider the importance of identifying their own preferred teaching styles and the students' learning style preferences.
- Without the application of multidimensional standard tools, it is difficult to guess learning and teaching styles; therefore, teachers should use standard instruments to determine and to profile their students preferred learning styles.
- Students benefit more when they are aware of their learning style preference so that they can make the most of their style preferences. Therefore, teachers need to help their students to be aware of their preferred learning styles. Besides, they have to encourage occasionally their students to extend themselves beyond the learning styles they strongly favored.
- In order to address the diverse learning style preferences of students, teachers need to provide a wide range of activities within their lesson that cater to different styles. More over, it is crucial to prepare a learning environment and physical setting that welcome and accommodate a variety of styles.
- Giving due attention to the different learning behavior of among ethnically different students to address the differences should be part of EFL teachers job, particularly in a multicultural contexts. It should be noted that there are also differences within groups in how students prefer to approach their learning.
- Material designers have to take the diverse learning styles into account while they are preparing course books. Before the development of any course material, survey should be conducted to test and find out at least the major learning styles favored by different multi-ethnic groups of students. This enables the material designers to avoid contents and activities which may not acceptable in a given cultural context.
- The teacher education curriculum must ensure that graduates have intercultural competence. Therefore, teacher training programs in our country should give due consideration to raise the multicultural awareness of would-be EFL teachers.

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Appendix I

# Perceptual Learning-Style Preference Questionnaire

Department \_\_\_\_\_ Ethnicity \_\_\_\_\_ Year \_\_\_\_\_

## Directions

People learn in many different ways. For example, some people learn primarily with their eyes (visual learners) or with the ears (auditory learners); some people prefer to learn by experience and/or by "hands-on" tasks (kinesthetic or tactile learners); some people learn better when they work alone while others prefer to learn in groups.

This questionnaire has been designed to help you identify the way(s) you learn best--the way(s) you *prefer* to learn.

Read each statement on the following pages. Please respond to the statements AS THEY APPLY TO YOUR STUDY OF ENGLISH.

Decide whether you agree or disagree with each statement. For example, if you strong agree, mark:

<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>U</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>SD</b>
Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
X				

Please respond to each statement quickly, without too much thought. Try not to change your responses after you choose them. Please answer all the questions. Please use a pen to mark your choices.

## Perceptual Learning-Style Preference Questionnaire

<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>U</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>SD</b>
Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
X				

Item	SA	A	U	D	SD
1. When the teacher tells me the instructions I understand better.					
2. I prefer to learn by doing something in class.					
3. I get more work done when I work with others.					
4. I learn more when I study with a group.					
5. In class, I learn best when I work with others.					
6. I learn better by reading what the teacher writes on the chalkboard.					
7. When someone tells me how to do something in class, I learn it better.					
8. When I do things in class, I learn better.					
9. I remember things I have heard in class better than things I have read.					
10. When I read instructions, I remember them better.					
11. I learn more when I can make a model of something.					
12. I understand better when I read instructions.					
13. When I study alone, I remember things better.					
14. I learn more when I make something for a class project.					
15. I enjoy learning in class by doing experiments.					
16. I learn better when I make drawings as I study.					
17. I learn better in class when the teacher gives a lecture.					
18. When I work alone, I learn better.					

19. I understand things better in class when I participate in role-playing.

20. I learn better in class when I listen to someone.

21. I enjoy working on an assignment with two or three classmates.

22. When I build something, I remember what I have learned better.

23. I prefer to study with others.

24. I learn better by reading than by listening to someone.

25. I enjoy making something for a class project.

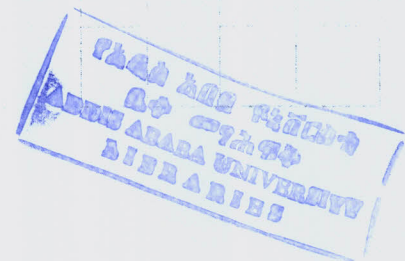
26. I learn best in class when I can participate in related activities.

27. In class, I work better when I work alone.

28. I prefer working on projects by myself.

29. I learn more by reading textbooks than by listening to lectures.

30. I prefer to work by myself



Appendix II

## Teaching-Style Preference Questionnaire

### Directions

Teachers teach in many different ways. For example, some teachers prefer to teach using lecture method; some teachers prefer to teach by experience and/or by "hands-on" tasks; some teachers think they teach better when they give individual work while others prefer to teach using group work.

This questionnaire has been designed to help you identify the way(s) you *prefer* to teach.

Read each statement on the following pages. Please respond to the statements AS THEY APPLY TO YOUR TEACHING OF ENGLISH.

Decide how frequently you do things which are described in each statement. For example, if you do it always, mark:

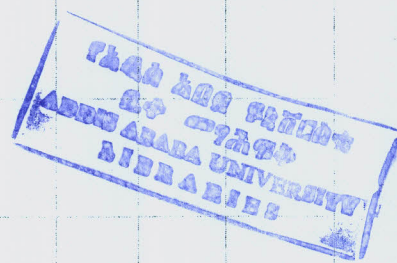
<b>AL</b> Always	<b>OF</b> Often	<b>ST</b> Sometimes	<b>RA</b> Rarely	<b>NV</b> Never
X				

Please respond to each statement quickly, without too much thought. Try not to change your responses after you choose them. Please answer all the questions. Please use a pen to mark your choices.

### Teaching-Style Preference Questionnaire

<b>AL</b> Always	<b>OF</b> Often	<b>ST</b> Sometimes	<b>RA</b> Rarely	<b>NV</b> Never
X				

Item	AL	OF	ST	RA	NEV
1. In class, I tell instructions to my students orally.					
2. I let students do something practically in class.					
3. When I teach, I ask students to work together.					
4. In class, I present the subject matter in a way that enables students to study in a group.					
5. In class, I let students work together.					
6. I write what I teach on the chalkboard.					
7. In class, when students are doing something I tell them how to do it.					
8. When I teach I allow students to do things in class.					
9. In class, I tell instructions to my students orally in stead of asking them to read.					
10. When I teach, I let students read and understand instructions.					
11. I n my class, I encourage students to make a model of something.					
12. When I teach, I encourage students to read and understand instructions.					
13. In class, I give students individual work.					
14. When I teach, I give class projects to let each student make something for the class project.					
15. In class, I let students do experiments.					



16. I encourage students to make drawings as I study.

17. I give lecture in class

18. When I teach I encourage students to work alone.

19. In class, I use role-play to promote students participation.

20. In class I make students learn by listening.

21. I give group assignments so that students work in a group of two or three.

22. When I teach, I let students build something so that they remember what they have learned better.

23. I present activities that enable students to study and work together.

24. In class, I make students read and understand.

25. I like students to embark on a class project and give opportunity for each student to make something.

26. I use activities which help students participate in class.

27. In class, I give activities which enable students to work alone / individual /.

28. I give students individual project work so that they can work individually.

29. I ask students to read textbooks individually.

30. I use activities which allow students to work individually.

16. I encourage students to make drawings as I study.					
17. I give lecture in class					
18. When I teach I encourage students to work alone.					
19. In class, I use role-play to promote students participation.					
20. In class I make students learn by listening.					
21. I give group assignments so that students work in a group of two or three.					
22. When I teach, I let students build something so that they remember what they have learned better.					
23. I present activities that enable students to study and work together.					
24. In class, I make students read and understand.					
25. I like students to embark on a class project and give opportunity for each student to make something.					
26. I use activities which help students participate in class.					
27. In class, I give activities which enable students to work alone / individual /.					
28. I give students individual project work so that they can work individually.					
29. I ask students to read textbooks individually.					
30. I use activities which allow students to work individually.					

Appendix III  
Students Interview Questions

1. How do you prefer to learn English in the classroom?
2. Do you think that you English teachers teach you in the way you prefer to learn?
3. What do you feel when the teacher's preferred mode of teaching is deferent from your preferred way of learning?
4. Do you think that the teachers' ways of teaching have an impact on your success in learning English?
5. Where do you think your preferred way of learning come from? For example, as the result of your previous educational experience? Family background?,etc.

## Appendix IV

### Teachers Interview Questions

1. How do you prefer to teach English in the class room?
2. What do you think are the sources of your preferred mode of teaching?
3. Do you think that EFL teachers should know their students' learning styles?
4. Have you ever assessed your students learning style preferences? If not, how do you identify the students' preferred way of learning?
5. Do you think that students who have same ethnic background exhibit similar learning style preferences in the classroom?
6. What are the mechanisms, if any, that you apply to address the learning styles of multiethnic background students in the classroom?
7. Do you think that mismatch between teachings and learning styles in the classroom affects the teaching and learning process?

## Declaration

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any university and that all sources of material used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged.

Name: Yosef Tiku

Signature: Yosef Tiku

Date: July 10, 2009

This thesis has been submitted for examination with my approval as University advisor.

Name: W/ro Elizabeth Ayalew

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_