

# Issues of Style in Second Language Learning: The Concern of Character and Personality

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**Abstract:-** Style is the man. This shows that style is individualistic and personally focused. Brown (1987) “style is those general characteristics of individual functioning that especially pertain to you as an individual, that differentiate you from someone else”. Brown (2000, 2007) posit that styles are generally idiosyncratic, specific to individuals. We often say, it is Soyinkas Achebes, or other literary styles in literature and the style in literature is known as literary styles. The number of learning styles are indeterminate and in a state of flux. It varies according to the analyst perspectives. Hill (1972) has 27, Brown (1987, 2000, 2007) has 5, Oxford (1999) has 4, and Ausubel (1968) has 18 different styles. Styles are those characteristics which differentiates one individuals from the other or group of individual from another group with similar characteristics in general and in language learning in particular.

**Keywords:-** Styles, Character, Personality.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Style is the manner in which something is expressed or performed, considered as separate from its intrinsic content meaning etc. It is a distinctive formed or characteristic manner of expression in words, music painting etc. while personality refers to the enduring characteristics and behavior that comprise a personal unique adjustment to life, including major traits, interest derives, values, self concept, ability and emotional pattern. Character as well is a feature belonging typically to a person, place or thing and serving to identify them. For instance, “certain characteristics of the school emerge from the study”.

The issue of style has attracted the attention of so many researchers, this has made the number of styles indeterminate and characterized with flux. Brown (1987, 2000, 2007) separate learners personality from learning styles, Gass and Selinker (2008) make no such distinction. According to them, personality and learning styles are used interchangeably even though personality is variable while learning style is stable.

On the other hand Gass and Selinker (2008) do not distinguish between cognitive and learning styles as Brown has done. The implication of Gass and Selinker points of view is that the distinction between cognitive and learning style is unnecessary as the two types of styles answer the

same question: How do individuals approach the task of learning and by extension tackle a problem? Just as we said earlier, that the number of styles is indeterminate and varies according to the analysts perspectives as we can see below thus:

➤ *Ehrman and Leaver (2003) identified nine learning styles with the following terms:*

- Field independence/dependence
- Random (non learner) vs sequential (learner)
- Global Vs Particular
- Inductive Vs Deductive
- Synthetic Vs Analytic
- Analogue Vs digital
- Concrete Vs Abstract
- Impulsive Vs reflective
- Levelling Vs Sharpening

➤ *Brown (2000, 2007) has the following:*

- Field independence
- Left and right brain functioning
- Ambiguity tolerance
- Reflectivity and impulsivity
- Visual and Antiquity styles

➤ *Gass and Selinker (2008) identify the following:*

- Extroversion and introversion
- Risk taking
- Field independence / dependence
- Visual / Auditory / kinesthetic

➤ *Oxford (1999) on his own has the following:*

- Analytic Vs Global
- Sensory Vs Preferences
- Intuitive / Random Vs Concretes/sequential learning
- Openness Vs Closur

Our observation among the four groups above include the following (i) various terms are used to refer to the same style (ii) the variation in the number of styles posited by each person. (iii) inconsistency and disagreement in their stakes (iv) there are no standardization. The practice in literature is to pair learning styles in terms of the learner in the context that learner is either this or that. The underlisted pairs are common in literature and we have chosen them because of their relevance to second language learning. We intend to discuss them one after the other, noticing the

general learning styles and their relevance in second language learning.

They are thus:

- Field independence Vs Field dependence
- Impulsive vs reflective
- Tolerance Vs intolerance of ambiguity
- Visual vs auditory and kinesthetic learners
- Intuitive Vs sensing

## II. FIELD – INDEPENDENT VS FIELD DEPENDENT

The field – independent learners are generally competitive, independent and self confident. A field – independent learner is one who is able to perceive particular relevant parts from a distracting whole. That is, if a person is able to solve a cross-word or jigsaw puzzle such a person is a field-independent learner. Also, if a road map is provided to a learner and he is able to read and interpret it and finds his way, such a learner is inclined to field-independent. The ability to perceive the relationship of the parts from the whole, has attention to details of a concepts proves that such a learner has analytical ability which enables him solve problems using logical step-by-step paths. For instance, in schools, from Nursery to Primary even up to secondary, the common feature is to create scenes (pictures) in the English text books (a football pitch, a market square, a worshipping place). The learner is asked to describe what he has seen in the picture. The ability of the learner to describe with precision the details of what the picture represents makes him a field independent learner.

On the other hand the field-dependent learner is the direct opposite of the field-independent learner. He sees the whole but cannot perceive the parts of the whole. Fielder and Solomon (2005) see the attribute of field-dependent learners to field-independent learners as a direct contrast. He continued that the field-independent learners, learn “in linear steps with each step following logically from the previous one”. The field-dependent learner, learns in large chunks absorbing materials almost randomly without seeing connections.

Brown (2007) provides the implication of the characteristics of the two types of learners to second language learning. First, the field-independent learner appears to relate closely to “classroom learning that involves analysis, attention to details exercise, drills and other focus activities” (pp.122). Abrams (1985) study, revealed that second language learners who were field-independent perform better in deductive lessons while those with field-dependent disposition succeed more in inductive language classes.

The second hypothesis is that the field – dependent learners appear by virtue of their sociability, empathy and perceptions of person, to be successful in learning the communicative aspects of a second language. Brown (2007) posit, that there is no empirical support for the suppose tendency because of absent of a valid test for a field-

dependent. Witkin and Goodenough (1981) Witkin (1962) have resulted in the following on field-independent/dependent:

- Field-independence increases as the child matures to adulthood.
- A person tend to be dominant in one mode or the other.
- Field-independent/dependent is a stable trait in adulthood.

## III. IMPULSIVE VS REFLECTIVE

Impulsive learners work best in group where they play the role of a teacher or facilitators. They are active learners through participation, discussion, application of things learnt and explanation of facts to others. On the other hand the reflective learners prefer working alone. They take time to think and analyse issues before assimilating or internalizing what is to be learnt. They are very slow in the learning process. A number of studies have shown the relevance of these traits in second language learning and classroom practice. Kagan (1965) and Goodman (1970) reveal that reflective learners are prone to making fewer errors in reading than their impulsive counterpart. The reason is because of their natural tendency to reflect before taking a leap. Conversely, their impulsive counterpart are faster readers and better at guessing words. Similarly too, the work of Kagan, Pearson and Welch (1966) shows that the reflective learners are more incline with ductive learning while the impulsive learners prefer inductive learning. Doron (1973) also found out that reflective learners were slower but more accurate than their impulsive counterpart in reading. Abraham (1981) found out that performance in proofreading tax was weakly related to reflective. Jamieson (1992) finally revealed that impulsive learners were better at language learning than their reflective counterpart.

Brown (2002) teachers are prone to censure mistakes of impulsive learners as evidence of lack of knowledge. The cause is their bid to be active learners, give answers to questions without thought. Also teachers will learn to be patient with reflective learners to allow them time to grapple with the problems of a learning tax before the proper solutions or answers.

The foregoing therefore, means that while the impulsive learners will prefer to work in groups, the reflective learners will like to work alone. The reflective learners also will think before speaking in the class, the impulsive learners will verbalize freely without giving thought to whatever they say.

From deductions, it has been concluded that the reflective learners are inclined with the inductive method of learning while the counterpart the impulsive learners are betterof with the deductive method of learning.

#### IV. AMBIGUITY

**Ambiguity** is a situation in which something has more than one possible meaning and may therefore cause confusion. It is a situation or statement that is unclear because it can be understood in more than one way.

A learner is said to be tolerant of ambiguity, when he is open minded in accepting ideas, events and facts that contradict his own personal views. On the other hand a learner is intolerant of ambiguity when he is rigid and dogmatic in his views and does not accept any other view that is contrary to his own.

Brown (2007) posit that both learners have their advantages and disadvantages. A learner who is tolerant of ambiguity has an open mind to certain innovative and creative ideas. He disregards uncertainties and ambiguities. It is the ability of this characteristics that enables him to tolerate every contradictions experienced in language structure such as inconsistent spelling, rules marked by exceptions, inconsistent meaning of words, pronunciation inconsistency among the lots. For one to be successful in any language learning, one has to tolerate these types of ambiguities because they enhance assimilation of learning properly. Brown also warned that too much of tolerance may be disastrous, because it may lead the learner to learn the rule in meaningless chunks by rote, without integrating effectively the linguistic rules into a whole system.

The intolerant ambiguity learner ask questions to see relationships before accepting and that is one of the advantages they have over the tolerant ambiguity learners. However too much questions have their limitations which may lead to lack of creativities. Naiman et al (1978) “found that tolerance of ambiguity was one fo the only two significant factors in predicting the success of their high school learners in French in Toronto”,

Chapelle and Roberts (1986) measured tolerance of ambiguity in learners of English as a second language, it was found that learners with high level of tolerance of ambiguity were slightly more successful in certain language tax.

#### V. VISUAL VS AUDITORY

Pictures, diagram, flow charts and films are the favorite of visual learners while listening to lecturers audio tapes are the best for the auditory learners. But for the Kinesthetic learners, they are at home with physical activity involving body movement as typical of singing and dancing lessons and also kinds of demonstrations.

Brown (2007) “most successful learners utilize both visual and auditory input, but slight preferences one way or the other may distinguish one learner from another, an important factor for classroom instruction”. This means that the key issue in the learning style is preference. The matter now become the problem of choice. The subject matter of Raids work is preference. Raid (1987) studied visual and

Auditory preferences across cultural boundaries. He used Korean, Japanese, Chinese, and Arabic students studying in United State to determine auditory and visual preferences. In Raid report, he concludes that Korean students were more prone to visual preference than their American counterparts. On the auditory scale, Chinese and Arabian students were more auditory inclined than their Chinese counterparts. However, Raid also revealed that some of the preferences were affected by such variables as gender, length of time in the United States, academic field of study, and levels of education.

#### VI. SENSING / INTUITIVE LEARNERS

Sensory learners are noted for their patience for detailing and very good in memorization. They are always practical sensitive. They like courses that have practical connection to the real world, and solving problems by well-established methods, in short they respect order. They love learning fast. On the other hand, the intuitive learners love abstractions and good at mathematical formulation. They are innovative and do not like courses that are involve in a lot of memorization and routine calculation. They learn fast and prefer discovering possibilities and relationships.

There is no research yet at our disposal in literature to determine learning preferences of this group in classroom situation. Permit us to speculate the following guesses. As a result of the inclination of the sensing learners to memorization they suppose to be good at grammar lessons. They will also be good at the deductive oriented language lessons as a result of their love in solving problems by well established methods. We also guess that speech and writing will interest them because of their inclination to the real life situation. On the other hand the intuitors because of their discovery tendencies may prefer the inductive to the deductive approach to learning. Their love for discovery relationships may make them take delight in vocabulary development classes and any others.

#### VII. CONCLUSION

We have been able to discuss the most essential learning styles in second language and this has helped us to understand the meaning of style. Learning style are those natural traits which individuals and groups of individuals have that enable them to make choices in approach to be employed. For instance, one type of method to the other, one type of test to the other etc. in summary, learning styles are those characteristic which differentiate one individual from another or groups of individuals from another group with similar characteristics in general and in language in particular.

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