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The Relationship between Yemeni EFL Postgraduate Students' Perceptual Learning Styles and Language Learning Strategies

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Abstract

Learning styles and strategies are among the most influential factors that account for some differences in how students learn. Because traditional teaching methods are still employed at universities, Yemeni instructors need to be aware of students' learning styles and strategies for improving classroom teaching and learning. This study intended to investigate the relationship between Yemeni EFL postgraduate students' Perceptual Learning Style Preferences (PLSP) and their Language Learning Strategies (LLSs). A total of 45 Yemeni postgraduate students (males = 14 and females = 31) enrolling in master's degree studies at Sana'a University completed two kinds of questionnaires adapted from Reid's (1987) Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire (PLSPQ) and Oxford's (1990b) Strategy Inventory of Language Learning (SILL). The findings showed that kinesthetic, auditory, and tactile were the major learning style preferences (LSPs), whereas group and individual were the least preferred minor LSPs among the participants. Metacognitive, compensation, and cognitive strategies were the most frequently used, while memory and affective strategies were the least frequently used. A statistically significant relationship was found between the participants' PLSP and their LLSs. These findings may help curriculum developers and language instructors incorporate learning styles and strategies into the syllabus to accommodate individual differences and facilitate learning.

1. INTRODUCTION

From the early 1970s, the focus of second language (L2) or foreign language (FL) research has shifted from teacher-centred to the learner-centred approach, aiming at promoting learning through meaningful individual and interactive tasks (O'Neill, Snow, & Peacock,1999), and incorporating a focus on learning styles and strategies into language curricula (Wong & Nunan, 2011). Shekari and Rassaei (2014) claim that learner-centered education emphasizes learners' fundamental diversity in the learning process while also maximizing L2 and FL students' demands for meaningful communicative opportunities and fostering students' active participation in the classroom. Although the idea of a student-centered approach to learning is not new, it is now more crucial than ever because of the increasing needs of the knowledge-based economy and modern communication and information technology (Payaprom &

Payaprom, 2020). According to Payaprom and Payaprom (2020), this approach will increase students' success by developing their critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Several factors that account for some of the variations in how students learn have been identified by educational research (Reid, 1987). Among these influential factors are learning styles and strategies, which "help determine how –and how well –our students learn a second or foreign language" (Oxford, 2003, p. 1). Researchers and practitioners concur that the diversity and variation of individual learners' learning styles and strategies account for the rate and the degree of success of L2 learners (Ellis 1985, as cited in Wintergerst, DeCapua, & Verna, 2002). Cohen (2010) indicates that learning style preferences (LSPs) and learning strategies are the most significant factors influencing the acquisition of language skills. Similarly, Oxford (1990a) asserts that learning styles and strategies are "predictors of language proficiency" and have been shown "to be predictive of success in language learning" (p. 68). Additionally, they affect the student's ability to learn in a certain instructional setting (Oxford, 2003). Since the relationship between perceptual learning style preferences (PLSP) and language learning strategies (LLSs) has been examined in several studies around the world (e.g., Al-Hebaishi, 2012; Alkahtani, 2016; Alnujaidi, 2019; Atika, 2019; Farajolahi & Nimvari, 2014; Jhaish, 2010; Muniandy & Shuib, 2016), only few studies have examined the relationship between PLSP and LLSs of Yemeni EFL university students, including those studies conducted by Al-Ariqi and Bladram (2017) and Mahfoodh (2017).

Despite the preponderance of research on the relationship between PLSP and LLSs in both English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL) contexts, it is obvious that this research field is still in its infancy within the Yemeni EFL context, with a dearth of studies conducted to date on the relationship between PLSP and LLSs namely, in the university context. Therefore, the present study seeks to fill such a gap by raising both students' and teachers' awareness and their deep understanding of the factors that influence their language acquisition and achievement. The present study mainly aims to identify the most common PLSP, the most and least frequent types of LLSs used by Yemeni EFL postgraduate students, and investigate the relationship between students' PLSP and their LLSs. Thus, the present study contributes towards raising teachers' awareness of the methods that should be employed to fit their students' LSPs and strategy use. It may also help teachers and students better understand their learning styles so they can change, adapt, or modify them to improve learning.

1.2.Study Questions

This study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What are the most common PLSP among Yemeni EFL postgraduate students?
2. What types of LLSs are most/least frequently used by Yemeni EFL postgraduate students?
3. Is there any significant relationship between Yemeni EFL postgraduate students' PLSP and their LLSs use?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Students' learning styles are one of the factors that help them succeed academically. Learning styles are one of the most extremely used terms in the field of language teaching and learning process that refer to how students learn. The research literature provides many useful

definitions of learning styles. One of the earliest definitions of learning style is given by Keefe (1979, p. 4, as cited in Radwan, 2014, p. 23) as "cognitive, affective, and physiological traits that are relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive, interact with, and respond to the learning environment". In a similar vein, Rido and Wahyudin (2020) define them as the ways in which an individual characteristically acquires, retains, and retrieves information. According to Oxford (2003), learning styles refer to the general approaches students use in acquiring a new language or learning any other subject. Regardless of the subject being studied or the skill being mastered (Wong & Nunan, 2011), these styles are relatively fixed traits that are always displayed by students in varying contexts and situations. Other researchers (e.g., Wintergerst et al., 2002) considered learning styles as tendencies or preferences of individuals with respect to how they learn. Therefore, the aforementioned definitions focus on individuals' personal predispositions for how they prefer to learn in a particular situation.

Reid (1987) recognized the following six main types of students' learning styles: 1). Visual learners: primarily depend on their eyes to learn and prefer watching. 2). Auditory learners depend on their ears to learn more easily and prefer listening to lectures and audiotapes. 3). Kinesthetic learners: completely rely on their whole body and enjoy physical activity and movement. 4). Tactile learners: mostly favor hands-on tasks where they can learn better by touch. 5). Group learners: largely learn better when they work in groups or with others. 6). Individual learners: learn best while working or studying alone.

Regarding learning strategies, the strategy concept was originated from ancient Greek term *straēgíā*, meaning the command of a general in an attempt to win a war (Oxford, 2011a) or plans for winning a war (Oxford, 2011b). It is originally a military term that currently refers to a systematic plan for achieving any goal (Oxford, 2011b). Learning strategies have been defined by a great number of scholars (e.g., Chamot, 2005; Oxford, 2011a, 2011b, 2017), although a contradiction appears among these researchers resulting in different or inconsistent definitions. For instance, Chamot (2005) defines learning strategies as "procedures that facilitate a learning task [and] are most often conscious and goal-driven" (p, 112). Oxford (2002) argues that there is a difficulty in conceptualizing and defining learning strategies in a uniformly meaningful and comprehensive way and this problem is still existed in the research field of LLSs. Nevertheless, Oxford (2017) has provided a seemingly straightforward functional definition of LLSs by stating that "A learning strategy is the learner's plan of action for finding or following the desired track through experience, study, or by being taught" (p. 13). An alternative definition of LLSs is offered by O'Malley and Chamot (2012, as cited by Pratiwi, 2022), according to which these strategies involve special thoughts or behaviors that learners use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information. Another working definition of LLSs is given by Oxford (2011b) as the learner's goal-oriented actions for enhancing achievement or proficiency, completing a task, or making learning more efficient, effective, and easier. Therefore, according to Griffiths (2004), LLSs have been hotly debated since 1970s and they remain controversial. Thus, it is impossible to synthesize all of the numerous definitions offered by different academics when it comes to defining LLSs.

Oxford (2002) declares that there is a "lack of a coherent, widely accepted system for describing strategies" (p. 127). For redressing the woeful lack of consensus in strategy categorizations, Oxford (1990b) has developed a more coherent, comprehensive, and detailed

strategy classification system. It contains two main classes of strategies that are subdivided into a total of six categories. The first major class is direct strategies, ,which includes memory strategies for remembering and retrieving new information when needed for communication, cognitive strategies for understanding and producing messages in the target language, and compensation strategies for using the language despite the knowledge gap. The other major class is indirect strategies which consist of metacognitive strategies for coordinating the learning process through planning, arranging, focusing, and evaluating; affective strategies for regulating emotions, motivations, and attitudes related to language learning; and social strategies for learning through interaction with others.

In literature, previous studies have shown that there was a relationship between PLSP and LLSs (Atika, 2019; Al-Hebaishi, 2012; Alkahtani, 2016; Alnujaidi, 2019; Mahfoodh, 2017). For instance, Jhaish (2010) examined the relationship between PLSP and LLSs among EFL Palestine English major students at Al Aqsa University and revealed a significant positive relationship between kinesthetic style and memory strategies and between group learning style and compensation strategies. Similarly, Al-Hebaishi (2012) examined the relationship between PLSP and LLSs among Taibah University's female EFL Saudi major students and revealed a significant relationship between the visual learning style and memory strategies and between the visual learning style and affective strategies. One more study conducted by Alkahtani (2016) examined the relationship between the PLSP and LLSs among Saudi EFL college students and reported significant correlations between PLSP and LLSs use, with the strongest correlations existing between visual, auditory, kinesthetic styles and metacognitive strategies.

Additional studies seek to explore the existing relationship between PLSP and LLSs. Mohfoodh (2017) study yielded positive findings regarding the relationship between students learning styles and strategies among Yemeni EFL students. The findings showed a statistically significant relationship between PLSP and LLSs, with tactile learning style being correlated with all strategy categories except for affective strategies. Kinesthetic learning style was also found to be correlated with memory, metacognitive, and social strategies, while auditory learning style was correlated with cognitive and social strategies. In a similar vein, Atika (2019) conducted a correlational study to explore the relationship between PLSP and LLSs among Indonesian students and found significant relationships between visual style and cognitive and metacognitive strategies; between auditory style and cognitive and compensation strategies. Moreover, social strategies were correlated with tactile, group, and individual styles.

Due to the paucity of research in language learning literature on the correlation between learning styles and strategies in the Arab contexts generally and in Yemen specifically, it is obviously emphasized that much more research would be of great need. Therefore, this study, through a literature review of related studies, it is aimed to shed more light on the relationship between PLSP and LLSs of students.

3. METHODOLOGY

This descriptive study was designed to investigate the relationship between students' PLSP, and their LLSs use for a better understanding of the factors that affect their language learning. The study also identified the most common PLSP and the frequent use of LLSs by Yemeni postgraduate students. In this study, two instruments were used to collect quantitative data. The

first questionnaire was Reid's (1987) Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire (PLSPQ), which was used to identify the major, minor, and negligible LSPs of the students (See Appendix A). The second one was Oxford's (1990b) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), which was used to assess the frequency of LLSs use by ESL/EFL students (See Appendix B). The PLSPQ was selected since it was specifically created to examine learning styles for language learners of non-native speakers of English (Alkahtani, 2016). Although PLSPQ is outdated, many researchers still find it useful (Mahfoodh, 2017).

Additionally, the instrument is very user-friendly, short, written in a simple language (Alkahtani, 2016), and comes with a self-scoring sheet and a brief description of preferred learning styles that includes practical ideas for learners. Likewise, the SILL was chosen for its high reliability and validity, clarity, comprehensiveness, and application (Alkahtani, 2016). It was also translated into more than 20 languages, making it the most extensively used learning strategy instrument (Oxford, 2011b).

3.1.Study Sample

The respondents of the current study were (45) Yemeni EFL postgraduate students (males = 14 and females = 31) enrolled in master studies at Sana'a University, Faculty of Languages, during the academic year of 2020. The population of the Yemeni EFL postgraduate students was (51) students. The sample was imbalanced because it was the available sample that was selected based on convenience sampling. In fact, the existing difference in the number of male and female students reflects the demography of the English department, where the female-male ratio is 2 to 1 (Radwan, 2014). The participants of this study were teaching general English courses at several language institutes and schools in Sana'a. In terms of their English learning experiences, all the participants have received at least four years of English university education and the length of their English education were about the same. All were Yemeni males and females, and their ages ranged from 24 to 38 years. The participants were informed that the data collected from the two questionnaires were for academic purposes, and their responses to the questionnaires would be kept confidential, and would have no effect on their course grades. The completed questionnaires were collected right after the participants completed them. Table (1) shows the distribution of the participants of the present study.

Table 1: Distribution of the Participants

Gender	Number	Percentage (%)
Male	14	32 %
Female	31	68 %
Total	**45**	**100 %**

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results and discussion are reported in light of the study's key questions formulated earlier. Further, it is worth pointing out that interpreting the overall mean scores for each category of learning styles was principally guided by Reid's (1987) measuring instrument, which had assigned mean score classification of 38-50 for major, 25-37 for minor, and a mean score less than 25 is assigned for negligible learning style category. In addition, it is worth pointing out that the researcher interprets the overall mean scores of the six categories of LLSs in accordance with what Oxford (1990b) suggested in her rating of the use of LLSs. Oxford

suggested that a mean score less than 2.4 is considered low usage, mean scores fell between 2.5 and 3.4 as medium usage, and a mean score of more than 3.5 is high usage.

4.1.The most common PLSP among Yemeni EFL postgraduate students

The overall mean scores of the six categories of PLSP preferred by Yemeni EFL postgraduate students, as shown in Table (2), fell between 33.77 and 42.41 on Reid's (1987) scale. Table (2) demonstrates the participants' overall learning style preference for each of the six categories of PLSP in descending order.

Table 2: Overall Learning Style Preference and Ranks of the six Categories of PLSP

Rank	Learning Styles	*M*	*SD*	*%*	*Type*
1	Kinesthetic	42.36	7.04	84.71	Major
2	Auditory	40.89	6.50	81.78	Major
3	Tactile	40.62	7.21	81.24	Major
4	Visual	37.82	6.59	75.64	Minor
5	Group	36.80	9.79	73.60	Minor
6	Individual	33.82	10.54	67.64	Minor
Overall Average		**38.72**	**5.07**	**77.44**	**Major**

As indicated in Table (2), the total average of the overall preference of the six categories of PLSP by Yemeni postgraduate students was at a major learning style preference (*M*= 38.72, *SD*= 5.). It is clear from Table (2) that every category of PLSP has assigned a mean score above 30; therefore, these results indicate that no category of negligible learning style preference reported by Yemeni postgraduate students.

The finding indicated that Yemeni postgraduate students are majoring in LSPs, regarding the six categories of PLSP suggested by Reid (1987), which refers to the style that the students learn best and generally have a strong preference tendency toward using all the six categories of PLSP. Therefore, this finding seems to suggest that Yemeni postgraduate students are aware, know, and acquainted with their preferred learning styles that facilitate how they learn best. Based on this finding, it can be inferred that these Yemeni students are successful students in language learning. This assumption is supported by Cohen and Weaver (2005), who claim that "the greater the number of styles students can use, the more successful they will be at learning language" (p. 5). In brief, this finding also indicates that Yemeni postgraduate students are likely to be flexible enough to enjoy a wide variety of activities in the language classroom.

Based on the overall average in Table 2, three categories of PLSP out of six were easily identified as a major learning style preference. Among all the major learning style preferences, the most preferred mode was kinesthetic (*M*= 42.36, *SD*= 7.04), followed by the *auditory* style (*M*= 40.89, *SD*= 6.50). The third favoured learning style was tactile (*M*= 40.62, *SD*= 7.21). On the other hand, the other three categories were clearly recognized as minor learning style preferences. Among these categories, the *visual* learning style came into the fourth favored rank (*M*= 37.82, *SD*= 6.59), closely followed by the *group* learning style (*M*= 36.80, *SD*= 9.79). The last and least favoured category was the *individual* style (*M*= 33.82, *SD*= 66.64). This finding is consistent with the finding of AlSafi (2010), who reported that Saudi second-year

medical students generally favoured kinesthetic, auditory, and tactile learning styles as their major preferences, while visual, group, and individual learning styles were preferred as their minor preferences. On the contrary, this finding does not coincide with Alkahtani (2016) finding, who reported that Saudi EFL college students showed minor preference tendencies toward using all the six categories of PLSP.

As indicated in Table (2), the most preferred major styles of Yemeni postgraduate students were kinesthetic, auditory, and tactile LSPs. This finding implies modality strengths which, according to Kinsella (1995), may occur in a single channel (e.g., visual) or be mixed with two or more channels (e.g., kinesthetic, tactile, and auditory). Kinsella claims that modality strengths develop with age, and those with mixed modality strengths have a definitely better opportunity for success because they can absorb information in any way it is presented.

Hence, the result seems to suggest that Yemeni postgraduate students prefer a learning style that involves them in experiential learning: total physical involvement in a learning situation. They absorb and retain information well when actively participating in activities like field trips and role-playing in the classroom. They also learn best when they have the opportunity to do "hands-on" experiences with materials. Besides, they tend to be auditory students who learn more effectively by listening to spoken words and oral explanations. Therefore, they benefit from hearing audio tapes, lectures, and class discussions. This finding can be attributed to the extensive use of the lecture method by university instructors, which may force students to learn in more auditory ways that can develop students' auditory skills at the risk of minimizing the development of other modes of learning.

Moreover, it is clear from Table (2) that the least favoured minor perceptual modes of Yemeni postgraduate students were a group and individual learning styles. However, the fact that the selection of group learning style as a minor by the respondents may indicate that they do not consider how much group work is important to be done in university classes. Furthermore, they had the lowest preference mean for individual learning style, although it is still indicative mean of minor learning style preference, which, according to Reid (1987), indicates areas where students can also still function well and learn in several different ways. Reid (1987) argues that one of the reasons behind the lower preference mean for individual style is probably related to culture in particular and previous educational experience that enter into student LSPs.

Briefly, the findings of this study are, to a large extent, consistent with Ried's (1987) findings, who found that kinesthetic, tactile, and auditory were the most preferred major learning style preference of Arabic EFL students, and group and individual were the least preferred minor learning style preference. Similarly, the results of this study are in line with the results of Farajolahi and Nimvari (2014) who revealed that the most preferred major learning styles among Iranian EFL learners were kinesthetic, tactile, and auditory, whereas group and individual learning were the least favored minor learning style preference among the participants.

The tendency for kinesthetic and auditory learning styles corresponds with the results of the studies of Wintergerst et al. (2002) and Muniandy and Shuib (2016), who found that

kinesthetic and auditory learning styles were the most preferred modes among their participants. Also, the findings of Alnujaidi's (2019) study reported the same result favoring kinesthetic and auditory as the dominant PLSP and disfavored the individual learning style.

To provide clear insights, the participants' responses were examined for all items that constitute each type of Reid's (1987) style. As shown in Table (3), all individual items of the six categories of PLSP are generally used with a major and minor preference by the students who participated in the current study. None of the 30 items of PLSP in this study fell in the negligible learning style preference (i.e. mean values below 2.5). Among the 30 styles, 19 (63.33%) styles fell under major preference, above 3.7; five of these styles are kinesthetic, five tactile, four auditory, and three visual learning styles. For getting better insights, the participant's responses to the items of PLSPQ are included in Appendix A.

Table 3: Rank Order of Students' Individual Items of Style Preference and Frequency of Usage

Rank	Item No.	Style	*M*	*SD*	*Type*
1	1	Auditory	4.69	0.70	Major
2	26	Kinesthetic	4.36	0.71	Major
3	7	Auditory	4.36	0.83	Major
4	2	Kinesthetic	4.29	0.99	Major
5	8	Kinesthetic	4.29	0.99	Major
6	12	Visual	4.27	0.69	Major
7	11	Tactile	4.22	1.02	Major
8	19	Kinesthetic	4.2	0.79	Major
9	14	Tactile	4.18	0.89	Major
10	10	Visual	4.16	0.93	Major
11	22	Tactile	4.13	0.94	Major
12	15	Kinesthetic	4.04	1.00	Major
13	6	Visual	3.98	1.10	Major
14	4	Group	3.93	1.12	Major
15	25	Tactile	3.89	1.11	Major
16	17	Auditory	3.89	1.09	Major
17	16	Tactile	3.89	1.15	Major
18	9	Auditory	3.89	1.21	Major
19	23	Group	3.80	1.25	Major
20	5	Group	3.69	1.20	Major
21	20	Auditory	3.62	1.05	Major
22	28	Individual	3.53	1.47	Major
23	3	Group	3.51	1.25	Major
24	21	Group	3.47	1.27	Minor
25	13	Individual	3.44	1.34	Minor
26	30	Individual	3.42	1.42	Minor
27	18	Individual	3.31	1.28	Minor
28	24	Visual	3.29	1.24	Minor
29	29	Visual	3.22	1.31	Minor
30	27	Individual	3.20	1.29	Minor

As indicated in Table (3), the individual items of learning styles which scored means above 4.00 were mostly related to kinesthetic, auditory, and tactile learning styles. The highest rating

was given to the auditory style item 1, *When the teacher tells me the instructions I understand better* (*M*= 4.69), followed by the kinesthetic style item 26, *I learn best in class when I can participate in related activities*, and the auditory style item 7, *When someone tells me how to do something in class, I learn it better*, which obtained the same mean score (*M*= 4.36). Two individual items of kinesthetic style, namely item 2, *I prefer to learn by doing something in class*, and item 8, *When I do things in class, I learn better*, came in the third rank and scored the same mean value (*M*= 4.29). Visual style item 12, *I understand better when I read instructions* (M= 4.27), came in the fourth rank, followed by the tactile style item 11, *I learn more when I can make a model of something* (*M*= 4.22). In the sixth rank came the kinesthetic style item 19. *I understand things better in class when I participate in role-playing* (*M*= 4.20), followed by the tactile style item 14, *I learn more when I make something for a class project* (*M*= 4.18). The one before the last was the tactile style item 22 *When I build something, I remember what I have learned better* (*M*= 4.13), and the last one was the kinesthetic style item 15, *I enjoy learning in class by doing experiments*, (*M*= 4.04).

The preferences of the students obviously indicate that they learn and understand better through listening to oral instruction. They like whole-body movement when participating in related classroom activities and enjoy manipulating materials to learn new information. The individual style was the least preferred mode, indicating that Yemeni postgraduate students do not appreciate studying new materials alone and may not make better progress in learning when working alone.

4.2.Most and least types of LLSs frequently used by Yemeni EFL postgraduate students

The overall mean scores of the six categories of LLSs used by Yemeni EFL postgraduate students are shown in Table (4). As it can be seen, all the mean scores of the six categories of LLSs ranged from 3.39 to 4.02 on a scale of 1 to 5, a range which Oxford (1990b) regarded as strategies with a medium and high use range. Table (4) displays the participants' overall strategy use for each of the six categories of LLSs in descending order.

Table 4: Overall Use and Ranks of the Six Categories of LLSs

Rank	No.	Strategies	*M*	*SD*	*%*	*Degree*
1	4	Metacognitive	4.02	0.54	80.40	High
2	3	Compensation	3.67	0.74	73.48	High
3	2	Cognitive	3.59	0.53	71.84	High
4	6	Social	3.46	0.81	69.19	Medium
5	1	Memory	3.42	0.55	68.49	Medium
6	5	Affective	3.39	0.80	67.85	Medium
Overall Average			**4.31**	**0.54**	**86.25**	**High**

It is evident from Table (4) that none of the six categories of LLSs was reported to be used at a low-frequency level by Yemeni postgraduate students. However, the overall use of the six categories of LLSs by Yemeni postgraduate students, as shown in Table (4), was at a high level (*M*= 4.31, *SD*= 0.54). This finding is in line with Razak and Babikkoi's (2014) finding, who found that Malay secondary school students reported a high frequency level of LLSs use. Similar results were found by Abdul-Ghafour and Alrefaee (2019), who reported that Yemeni university high achievers were high strategy users to the majority of strategy categories.

This result indicates that Yemeni postgraduate students are high strategy users concerning the six categories of LLSs. It also implies that they always use LLSs more frequently for English language learning. This speculation is supported by Oxford's (1990b), who claims that "The higher a student's overall SILL average across all categories, the more frequently the student uses language learning strategies in general" (p. 280). A possible explanation for this finding is that the participants in the present study are all English majors, relatively experienced language learners with specialized career interests, and already know a lot about how to learn.

From Table 4, half of the strategy categories were used at a high-frequency level. Among all the high-frequency usage, the most preferred category was *metacognitive* strategies (*M*= 4.02, *SD*= 0.54), followed by *compensation* strategies (*M*= 3.67, *SD*= 0.74). In the third high rank came *cognitive* strategies (*M*= 3.59, *SD*= 0.53). On the other hand, the other half of the strategy categories were used at a medium level; *social* strategies came into the fourth favored rank (*M*= 3.46, *SD*= 0.81), closely followed by *memory* strategies (*M*= 3.42, *SD*= 0.55). The least frequently used category was the *affective* strategies (*M*= 3.39, *SD*= 0.80) though it was of medium use.

This finding is consistent with the findings of Abdul-Ghafour and Alrefaee (2019), who found that metacognitive, compensation, and cognitive strategies were the most frequently used by Yemeni university high achievers, while affective strategies were the least frequently used strategies. Likewise, Jhaish (2010) found that the most frequently used strategies by the Palestine students were metacognitive, followed by compensation and cognitive strategies, whereas affective strategies were the least frequently used strategies. Additionally, this result is partly consistent with the findings of Al-Buainain (2010), Alkahtani (2016), Alnujaidi (2019), and Muniandy and Shuib (2016) who found affective strategies were the least frequently used among their participants.

The high-frequency use of metacognitive strategies by Yemeni postgraduate students implies that they are experienced in coordinating and planning the best way to learn and evaluating their own mistakes and successes. This result suggests they appear to have a purely instrumental motivation for learning English. This result can be linked to the intensive learning environment of the programme (majoring in English), which can be a major contributor in several ways to the preferred usage and selection of both metacognitive and cognitive (Al-Buainain, 2010). This finding may also be a result of the students' extensive exposure to English education through the university curriculum for advancing their academic and professional careers. The relatively frequent to high use of metacognitive and cognitive strategies in the present study is similar to worldwide results among many different samples employing various versions of the SILL, as shown in Al-Hebaishi (2012), Alnujaidi (2019) and Farajolahi and Nimvari (2014).

The high usage of compensation strategies implies that Yemeni postgraduate students sometimes use these strategies when experiencing a temporary breakdown in speaking or writing performance. It also suggests that these Yemeni students previously gained knowledge of the target language to overcome any knowledge gaps in all four language skills. The high-frequency usage of compensation strategies is also reported in Jhaish's (2010) and Abdul-

Ghafour and Alrefaee's (2019) studies, which revealed that compensation strategies were also the most frequently used strategies among their participants.

The least frequently used strategies by Yemeni postgraduate students were affective strategies. The result possibly indicates low levels of anxiety among higher level students (i.e., Yemeni postgraduate students). Therefore, it can be claimed that when students reach a higher advanced level of language study, they have less need of affective strategies. These are not really strategies for learning but simply features which typically characterise lower-level students (Al-Buainain, 2010). This finding is consistent with the findings of Alkahtani (2016), Alnujaidi (2019), Jhaish (2010), and Muniandy and Shuib (2016), who revealed that affective strategies were least frequently used by their participants.

For providing a clear vision, the participants' responses for all individual items of Oxford's (1990b) SILL were analyzed. As indicated in Table (5), all individual items of the six strategy categories are generally used with high to medium frequency by the participants of the present study. However, in this study, only one item (2 %) of these individual strategies; memory strategy item number 6, was used with a low-frequency level (i.e. mean value below 2.5) that deals with participants' use of flash cards. Table 5 presents the individual items that constitute each category of Oxford's (1990b) SILL with the frequency usage and mean score for each item in descending order. To get better insights, the participants' responses to the items of the SILL are included in Appendix B.

Table 5: Rank Order of Students' Individual Strategy Preference and Frequency of Usage

Rank	Item No.	Strategy	*M*	*SD*	*Degree*
1	33	Metacognitive	4.42	0.78	High
2	31	Metacognitive	4.33	0.83	High
3	38	Metacognitive	4.27	0.81	High
4	32	Metacognitive	4.24	0.80	High
5	40	Affective	4.18	0.89	High
6	30	Metacognitive	4.09	0.85	High
7	29	Compensation	4.09	1.13	High
8	37	Metacognitive	4.04	0.85	High
9	11	Cognitive	4.02	1.20	High
10	10	Cognitive	3.98	1.23	High
11	2	Memory	3.96	0.90	High
12	25	Cognitive	3.91	1.15	High
13	18	Cognitive	3.91	1.28	High
14	49	Social	3.84	1.07	High
15	12	Cognitive	3.82	1.15	High
16	19	Cognitive	3.82	1.21	High
17	1	Memory	3.82	1.07	High
18	24	Compensation	3.8	1.06	High
19	50	Social	3.76	1.09	High
20	35	Metacognitive	3.76	1.00	High
21	13	Cognitive	3.76	1.03	High
22	4	Memory	3.73	1.16	High
23	45	Social	3.71	1.08	High
24	9	Memory	3.71	1.39	High
25	3	Memory	3.71	1.22	High
26	39	Affective	3.67	1.17	High
27	21	Cognitive	3.67	1.30	High
28	42	Affective	3.64	1.26	High

29	47	Social	3.60	1.16	High
30	34	Metacognitive	3.56	1.16	High
31	14	Cognitive	3.53	1.08	High
32	36	Metacognitive	3.47	1.1	Medium
33	27	Compensation	3.47	1.16	Medium
34	23	Cognitive	3.47	1.22	Medium
35	20	Cognitive	3.44	1.16	Medium
36	26	Compensation	3.42	1.29	Medium
37	17	Cognitive	3.42	1.12	Medium
38	28	Compensation	3.36	1.28	Medium
39	8	Memory	3.33	1.04	Medium
40	44	Affective	3.31	1.44	Medium
41	15	Cognitive	3.22	1.40	Medium
42	22	Cognitive	3.20	1.41	Medium
43	7	Memory	3.20	1.38	Medium
44	48	Social	3.13	1.24	Medium
45	16	Cognitive	3.02	1.32	Medium
46	41	Affective	2.93	1.42	Medium
47	5	Memory	2.91	1.31	Medium
48	46	Social	2.71	1.36	Medium
49	43	Affective	2.62	1.44	Medium
50	6	Memory	2.44	1.37	Low

Table 4 shows that most of the highest individual strategy items were related to metacognitive strategies. For example, the highest rating (i.e., mean value of 4.00) was given to strategy item 33: *I try to find out how to be a better learner of English*, (*M*= 4.42), item 31: *I notice my English mistakes and use that information to help me do better*, (*M*= 4.33), item 38: *I think about my progress in learning English*, (*M*= 4.27), item 32: *I pay attention when someone is speaking English*, (M= 4.24), item 30: *I try to find as many ways as I can to use my English*, (*M*= 4.09) which came in the sixth rank, and item 37: *I have clear goals for improving my English skills*, (*M*= 4.04) that got the eighth rank. An affective strategy item 40: *I encourage myself to speak English even when I am afraid of making a mistake*, scored the highest mean value of (4.18) and was the fifth in the rank order (see Table 5). A compensation strategy item 29: *If I can' t think of an English word, I use a word or phrase that means the same thing*, got a very high mean score of (4.09) and came in the seventh rank. Finally, a cognitive strategy item 11: *I try to talk like native English speakers*, (*M*= 4.02) which was the last item in this group of strategies that scored the high mean value of (4.00).

The preferences of the students indicate that they report efforts to find out ways to become good language learners and learn from their mistakes. They also acknowledge that they think about their progress in learning English and they appropriately employ attention to the use of English language in context which assist them to improve their speaking and listening skills. Furthermore, the students try to seek out the necessary opportunities and ways to practice their English as possible as they can and have clear goals for improving their English language skills. They appear to take risk wisely (i.e., self-encouragement) which involves a conscious decision to take reasonable risk in using the target language regardless of the possibility of making mistakes or encounter difficulties (Oxford, 1990b).

4.3.Relationship between Yemeni EFL postgraduate students' PLSP and their LLSs

To determine whether there was a statistically significant relationship between participants' PLSP and their LLSs, Pearson Correlation Coefficient analysis was computed. The correlation

analysis shows that there do exist relationships between PLSP and LLSs, which supports the claim of Oxford (1990a) that students' preferred learning style is generally reflected in the choice and spontaneously use of learning strategies. Table 6 presents the relationship between participants' PLSP and LLSs.

Table 6: Correlation Coefficient between PLSP and LLSs

Learning Styles		Memory	Cognitive	Compensation	Metacognitive	Affective	Social
Visual	Pearson Correlation	-.132-	.226	.121	.184	.126	.050
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.388	.136	.428	.226	.411	.745
	N	45	45	45	45	45	45
Auditory	Pearson Correlation	-.051-	.123	.036	-.025-	.087	.023
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.737	.421	.813	.870	.569	.881
	N	45	45	45	45	45	45
Kinesthetic	Pearson Correlation	-.049-	.126	.204	-.002-	.046	.185
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.749	.409	.179	.990	.764	.223
	N	45	45	45	45	45	45
Tactile	Pearson Correlation	.036	**.490****	.253	.256	.144	**.312***
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.813	.001	.094	.090	.344	.037
	N	45	45	45	45	45	45
Group	Pearson Correlation	.070	.106	.142	-.123-	-.068-	.177
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.650	.490	.352	.419	.657	.246
	N	45	45	45	45	45	45
Individual	Pearson Correlation	-.018-	.144	.200	.202	**.338***	-.066-
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.906	.344	.188	.182	.023	.667
	N	45	45	45	45	45	45

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

As shown in Table 6, the results revealed that the *tactile* learning style significantly correlated with *cognitive* and *social* strategies at $p < 0.01$ and 0.05 significance value, with Pearson correlation coefficient being .490 (p= .001) and .312 (p= .037), respectively. The results also showed that the *individual* learning style significantly correlated with *affective* strategies at $p < 0.05$ significance value with Pearson correlation coefficient being .338 (p= .023), respectively.

These findings imply that tactile students can mentally manipulate and directly transform the target language through reasoning, analysis, summarizing, synthesizing, and taking notes. They practice structures and sounds formally in natural settings (Oxford, 2003). The students in the present study also tend to learn the target language through cooperating with others and with native speakers, which allows students to interact with others to practice their language knowledge to develop communicative skills. Such strategies are usually directed at increasing the learners' exposure to L2 communication and interactive practice (Cohen, 2010). Tactile students appear to ask questions to clarify and verify social norms without any hesitation.

Furthermore, it can be added that they can empathize with others by developing cultural understanding and becoming aware of other people's thoughts and feelings. These findings are consistent with Alkahtani (2016) and Mahfoodh (2017), who reported a significant relationship between the tactile learning style and cognitive and social strategies. They are also partly consistent with Farajolahi and Nimvari (2014), who revealed a significant relationship between the tactile learning style and cognitive strategies.

The results also showed that the individual learning style significantly correlated with affective strategies, indicating that affective strategies are highly dependent on individual students' personalities. These results suggest that individual students know how to regulate their emotions and attitudes about learning, which may positively influence their language learning success since it can make learning more effective and enjoyable. They also imply that these types of students actively involve themselves in language learning by developing self-confidence and perseverance to attain communicative competence. These findings are consistent with Farajolahi and Nimvari (2014), who revealed a significant relationship between individual learning style and affective strategies.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study mainly investigated the relationship between the learning styles and strategies of Yemeni postgraduate students and examined the preferences of PLSP and the patterns of LLSs use. The results showed that the participants were major in learning style preference and high strategy users. Their learning styles are classified into major and minor preferences. They mostly preferred kinesthetic, auditory, and tactile as their major LSPs, whereas group and individual styles were the least preferred minor modes among them; however, such a result is still in the minor LSPs. Regarding LLSs, metacognitive, compensation and cognitive strategies were the most frequently used by the participants. On the other hand, memory and affective strategies were the least frequently used; however, such a result is still in the medium use of LLSs. Moreover, the findings revealed a statistically significant relationship between the participants' PLSP and LLSs.

Based on the findings of the present study, it can be pointed out that concerned parties, mainly students and instructors, should be aware of the effective role of learning styles and strategies as factors that can influence students' language performance. Instructors, especially in languages faculty, need to become more conversant with students' learning styles and strategies and think in terms of matching their teaching styles with students' LSPs. The data also suggests a change or variation in teachers' teaching style type as they use to teach students at higher levels through the lecture method. As a result, it would recommend against extensive use of the lecture method by university teachers, as it would continue to focus on only auditory learners and auditory skills. In addition, students need to develop more skills closely related to kinesthetic and tactile learning style characteristics. Therefore, university teachers should specifically incorporate kinesthetic and tactile learning style characteristics into courses to build students capabilities with these learning styles. Besides, some reconsideration of curricula and teaching methods by university teachers may be in order as the students in the current study do not consider the important role of group work in the university learning classroom environment.

Since this study is based on a sample of postgraduate English students in one university, it is just recommended to replicate further research by recruiting participants from different

English majors to examine and compare their PLSP in relation to various related variables such as motivation, gender, and academic achievement. Future studies of PLSP by university students from different major fields by adding other instruments like interviews and diaries should be carried out to gain much more representative findings.

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Appendix A

Rank Order of Students' Responses to the Individual Items of PLSPQ (items 1-30)

Rank	No.	Individual Learning Styles	*M*	*SD*
1	1	When the teacher tells me the instructions I understand better.	4.69	0.70
2	26	I learn best in class when I can participate in related activities.	4.36	0.71
3	7	When someone tells me how to do something in class, I learn it better.	4.36	0.83
4	2	I prefer to learn by doing something in class.	4.29	0.99
5	8	When I do things in class, I learn better.	4.29	0.99
6	12	I understand better when I read instructions.	4.27	0.69

7	11	I learn more when I can make a model of something.	4.22	1.02
8	19	I understand things better in class when I participate in role-playing.	4.2	0.79
9	14	I learn more when I make something for a class project.	4.18	0.89
10	10	When I read instructions, I remember them better.	4.16	0.93
11	22	When I build something, I remember what I have learned better.	4.13	0.94
12	15	I enjoy learning in class by doing experiments.	4.04	1.00
13	6	I learn better by reading what the teacher writes on the chalkboard.	3.98	1.10
14	4	I learn more when I study with a group.	3.93	1.12
15	25	I enjoy making something for a class project.	3.89	1.11
16	17	I learn better in class when the teacher gives a lecture.	3.89	1.09
17	16	I learn better when I make drawings as I study.	3.89	1.15
18	9	I remember things I have heard in class better than things I have read.	3.89	1.21
19	23	I prefer to study with others.	3.80	1.25
20	5	In class, I learn best when I work with others.	3.69	1.20
21	20	I learn better in class when I listen to someone.	3.62	1.05
22	28	I prefer working on projects by myself.	3.53	1.47
23	3	I get more work done when I work with others.	3.51	1.25
24	21	I enjoy working on an assignment with two or three classmates.	3.47	1.27
25	13	When I study alone, I remember things better.	3.44	1.34
26	30	I prefer to work by myself.	3.42	1.42
27	18	When I work alone, I learn better.	3.31	1.28
28	24	I learn better by reading than by listening to someone.	3.29	1.24
29	29	I learn more by reading textbooks than by listening to lectures.	3.22	1.31
30	27	In class, I work better when I work alone.	3.2	1.29
Overall PLSP			**38.72**	**5.07**

Appendix B

Rank Order of Students' Responses to the Individual Items of the SILL Questionnaire (items 1-50)

Rank	**No.**	**Learning Strategies**		
5	1	**Memory Strategies**	***M***	***SD***
11	2	I use new English words in a sentence so I can remember them.	3.96	0.90
17	1	I think of relationships between what I already know and new things I learn in English.	3.82	1.07
22	4	I remember a new English word by making a mental picture of a situation in which the word might be used.	3.73	1.16
24	9	I remember new English words or phrases by remembering their location on the page, on the board, or on a street sign.	3.71	1.39
25	3	I connect the sound of a new English word and an image or picture of the word to help remember the word.	3.71	1.22
39	8	I review English lessons often.	3.33	1.04
43	7	I physically act out new English words.	3.20	1.38
47	5	I use rhymes to remember new English words.	2.91	1.31
50	6	I use flashcards to remember new English words.	2.44	1.37
Total Average			**3.42**	**0.55**
3	**2**	**Cognitive Strategies**		

9	11	I try to talk like native English speakers.	4.02	1.20
10	10	I say or write new English words several times.	3.98	1.23
13	18	I first skim an English passage (read over the passage quickly) then go back and read carefully.	3.91	1.28
15	12	I practice the sounds of English.	3.82	1.15
16	19	I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English.	3.82	1.21
21	13	I use the English words I know in different ways.	3.76	1.03
27	21	I find the meaning of an English word by dividing it into parts that I understand.	3.67	1.30
31	14	I start conversations in English.	3.53	1.08
34	23	I make summaries of information that I hear or read in English.	3.47	1.22
35	20	I try to find patterns in English.	3.44	1.16
37	17	I write notes, messages, letters, or reports in English.	3.42	1.12
41	15	I watch English language TV shows spoken in English or go to movies spoken in English.	3.22	1.40
42	22	I try not to translate word-for-word.	3.20	1.41
45	16	I read for pleasure in English.	3.02	1.32
Total Average			**3.59**	**0.53**
2	**3**	**Compensation Strategies**		
7	29	If I can' t think of an English word, I use a word or phrase that means the same thing.	4.09	1.13
12	25	When I can' t think of a word during a conversation in English, I use gestures.	3.91	1.15
18	24	To understand unfamiliar English words, I make guesses.	3.80	1.06
33	27	I read English without looking up every new word.	3.47	1.16
36	26	I make up new words if I do not know the right ones in English.	3.42	1.29
38	28	I try to guess what the other person will say next in English.	3.36	1.28
Total Average			**3.67**	**0.74**
1	**4**	**Metacognitive Strategies**		
1	33	I try to find out how to be a better learner of English.	4.42	0.78
2	31	I notice my English mistakes and use that information to help me do better.	4.33	0.83
3	38	I think about my progress in learning English.	4.27	0.81
4	32	I pay attention when someone is speaking English.	4.24	0.80
6	30	I try to find as many ways as I can to use my English.	4.09	0.85
8	37	I have clear goals for improving my English skills.	4.04	0.85
20	35	I look for people I can talk to in English.	3.76	1.00
30	34	I plan my schedule so I will have enough time to study English.	3.56	1.16
32	36	I look for opportunities to read as much as possible in English.	3.47	1.1
Total Average			**4.02**	**0.54**
6	**5**	**Affective Strategies**		
5	40	I encourage myself to speak English even when I am afraid of making a mistake.	4.18	0.89
26	39	I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of using English.	3.67	1.17
28	42	I notice if I am tense or nervous when I am studying or using English.	3.64	1.26
40	44	I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning English.	3.31	1.44
46	41	I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in English.	2.93	1.42
49	43	I write down my feelings in a language learning diary.	2.62	1.44
Total Average			**3.39**	**0.80**
4	**6**	**Social Strategies**		
14	49	I ask questions in English.	3.84	1.07
19	50	I try to learn about the culture of English speakers.	3.76	1.09
23	45	If I do not understand something in English, I ask the other person to slow down or say it again.	3.71	1.08
29	47	I practice English with other students.	3.60	1.16
44	48	I ask for help from English speakers.	3.13	1.24
48	46	I ask English speakers to correct me when I talk.	2.71	1.36
Total Average			**3.46**	**0.81**
Overall LLSs			**4.31**	**0.54**