

A matter of style: looking at L2 teachers' teaching styles from the perspective of learning styles

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Abstract: *This study aims at identifying the learning styles most favored by L2 teachers, the relationship between L2 teachers' teaching styles and their own learning styles, students' attitudes towards discussing learning preferences, and the difficulties teachers face when trying to accommodate different learning styles in the classroom. Participants were eight teachers of English as a foreign language at the Extracurricular Language Courses offered by Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC). Data were collected through classroom recordings, questionnaires, a reflective session and a semi-guided interview with teachers. Results indicate that extraverts and kinesthetic are among the learning styles most favored, that teachers seem to teach according to their own learning styles, that students present a positive attitude towards discussing learning styles, and that teachers posit lack of time for planning their classes as one of the difficulties when trying to address different learners in the classroom.*

Key-words: *learning styles; teaching styles; instruction; balance.*

INTRODUCTION

At the heart of learning style theory lies the assumption that teachers can maximize learning by incorporating learning tasks that meet their students' learning styles (Wintergerst, DeCapua and Verna, 2003). The field of learning style research which concerns the match or mismatch between teachers' instructional style and students' learning styles is known as learner-instruction matching (Ellis, 1994). Studies on this issue have suggested that learners will differ in the type of instruction to which they best respond (Bialystok, 1985; Ellis, 1989). According to Dunn and Dunn (1993), the compatibility between the teacher's instructional style and the student's learning style is an important factor

in the learning process. Similarly, Bialystok (1985) claims that a minimal congruity between the type of instruction and students' preferred learning strategies is necessary for successful L2 acquisition.

On the other hand, mismatches between the teachers' teaching styles and learners' learning styles may have a negative impact on learning (Felder and Henriques, 1995). Nelson (1995) claims that teachers and students come to classrooms with certain assumptions about how learning takes place. When these assumptions diverge, frustration is likely to take place on the part of both teachers and students. In short, learner-instruction matching research is concerned with seeking the best type of instruction (Ellis, 1994). Within this perspective, the belief is that students learn best when they are in learning situations that match their learning style needs. Thus, it is likely that teachers who use instruction that is compatible with their students' learning styles may be able to reach a larger number of learners (Wintergest, DeCapua, Verna, 2003).

In order to meet students' learning styles, researchers suggest that teachers should aim at achieving a balanced teaching style (Oxford, 1993; Kinsella, 1995; Felder and Henriques, 1995). A balanced teaching style is the one which accommodates, simultaneously or sequentially, different learning styles in the classroom (Oxford, 1993; Felder and Henriques, 1995). In other words, a balanced teaching style is the one which is aimed at addressing all learning styles on an equal basis.

In developing a balanced teaching style, the aim is that teachers should address students according to their learning styles, as well as challenge students to stretch their learning preferences. Thus, a balanced teaching style is achieved when teachers, at times, expose students to learning tasks that match their learning styles, and, at other times, expose students to approaches other than their preferred ones (Oxford, 1993; Felder and Henriques, 1995). As a

consequence, learners will have opportunities to learn through their individual learning styles, as well as opportunities to stretch their learning preferences and become more flexible learners (Oxford, 1993; Kroonenberg, 1995).

Although there is agreement among researchers that by pursuing a balanced teaching style teachers may be better able to account for different learning styles in the classroom (Oxford, 1993; Felder and Henriques, 1995), being able to accommodate students' learning styles seems to be a complex task. First, teachers may have students with a variety of learning styles. Second, it is also difficult to assess students' learning styles because of the lack of reliable instruments to appreciate learning styles (Reid, 1995; Ellis, 1989). Third, teachers may be resistant to the idea of developing a balanced teaching style once they tend to teach through the ways they best learn, namely, according to their own learning styles (Oxford, 1990; Kinsella, 1995).

The general assumption in the present study is that adjusting instruction to match different learning styles may somehow have positive impacts on learning (Felder and Henriques, 1995). However, adjusting instruction to account for learning styles may be a complex task due to the problems and difficulties aforementioned. Thus, the general objective of the present study is to achieve a better understanding of the learning styles that tend to be most favored by L2 teachers' teaching styles, and of how L2 teachers can adjust their teaching styles to accommodate different learners' learning styles. In the following sections of the article, I shall present a brief review of the literature on learning and teaching styles, and reflective teaching, which will be followed by the method, data analysis and interpretation.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Defining learning styles

Since learning an L2 is a complex cognitive process (McLaughlin, 1987) which can be influenced by emotion (Schumann, 1994), I shall take the perspective that *learning style* is essentially a cognitive construct which may be influenced by emotion and can drive learners' behavior. Consequently, for the present study, I shall adopt Keefe's definition: "learning styles are cognitive, affective, and physiological traits that are relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive, interact with, and respond to the learning environment... Learning style is a consistent way of functioning, that reflects underlying causes of behavior" (Keefe, 1979, p. 4).

Myers and Briggs (1987) and Kinsella (1995) learning style Models

The frameworks chosen for data analysis were the Myers and Briggs (1987) and Kinsella (1995). The Myers and Briggs learning style model has originated one of the most widely used instruments to appreciate learning styles, the Myers and Briggs Type Indicator (1987), usually referred to as the MBTI (Sternberg and Grigorenko, 1997; Carrell and Monroe, 1995). Moreover, The Myers and Briggs Model is based on a traditional psychological theory extant for almost a hundred years, Jung's Theory of psychological types (1974).

Psychological types are mental patterns of the way people perceive and make judgments (Jung, 1974). According to Jung, all conscious¹ mental activity can be classified in

¹ The terms *conscious* and *consciousness* as present in Jung's theory mean awareness (Jung, 1974), and they seem to be used in a broader sense, not in the sense meant by Schmidt (1990), who defines *consciousness* in three different ways as: (1) awareness, (2) intention, and (3) knowledge.

four mental processes: two perception processes – sensing and intuition – and two judgment processes – feeling and thinking. In this theory, whatever comes into consciousness comes either through the senses or through intuition. As these perceptions continue in consciousness, they are analyzed and evaluated through the judgment processes, thinking and feeling (Lawrence, 1982).

According to Jung (1974), the four mental processes - - sensing, intuition, thinking and feeling -- are used by all human beings. However, these processes are not utilized equally well or in the same extents: each individual relies on certain mental processes more than on others. Consequently, some processes become predominant. Psychological types can be characterized according to the predominant mental processes.

In Jung's theory, psychological types are classified as sensing, intuitive, thinking and feeling. According to Jung (1974), sensing types easily memorize facts, details, and have accurate power of observation. Intuitive types tend to perceive what is symbolic and abstract and value complexity and possibilities. Thinking types pursue objectivity and logical analysis when making judgments. Finally, feeling types make judgments from a personal and subjective basis and value harmony.

Besides classifying psychological types as sensing, intuitive, thinking and feeling, Jung (1974) also classifies people as extraverts or introverts, according to their interest towards the world. Extraverts are those individuals that are motivated by the outer world of actions and objects. Introverts are those who are motivated by the inner world of ideas and reflection.

In Jung's theory, the mental processes are seen as polar opposites. In other words, the perception processes - - sensing and intuition -- are opposites. Likewise, the two judgment processes -- thinking and feeling -- are in opposition to each other. Therefore, polar opposite mental processes

can not be focused on at the same time. For instance, at the moment an individual is focused on intuitions, he/she cannot be simultaneously focused on sensation and vice-versa (Lawrence, 1982). In this sense, people may even shift from one mental process to another quite fast, but not focus on both at the same time. When a person relies on one mental process as a pattern of mental habit, this process prevails as the dominant process.

In order to counterbalance the dominant process, an auxiliary process is developed. According to Jung (1974), the auxiliary mental process is always distinct from the dominant one, but never opposite to it. For instance, thinking as a dominant process can have either intuition or sensing as an auxiliary process. However, it will never have feeling as an auxiliary process because feeling is the opposite mental process of thinking. By pairing dominant and auxiliary processes respectively, the following types are identified: sensing-feeler, sensing-thinker, intuitive-feeler, intuitive-thinker, thinker-sensing, thinker-intuitive, feeler-sensing, and feeler-intuitive. In addition to all this, people can be also extraverts or introverts.

Myers and Briggs (1987) interpreted Jung's theory and added one more dimension of psychological types: judging and perceiving. This dimension is related to the attitudes people take towards the world. When a judging process drives the attitude taken, the person tends to benefit from having control over events and by having things organized. However, when a perceiving mental process prevails, the person benefits from accepting events the way they happen and adapting to the new circumstances of life.

Since the Myers and Briggs model (1987) does not deal specifically with sensory preferences, these preferences were included in the data analysis of the present study by drawing on Kinsella (1995). This model concerns the sensory channels through which perception occurs. Educators often refer to these sensory channels as modalities, and "the sensory

channels through which each individual best absorbs and retain information have become known as modality strengths” (Kinsella, 1995, p.173).

Kinsella (1995) clarifies these learning styles. First, she remarks that visual and auditory learners seem to be described in oversimplified ways, the former being described as learners who best absorb and retain information through seeing, and the latter as learners who best absorb information through hearing. However, according to Kinsella (1995), visual learners may differ among themselves and so may auditory learners. Some visual learners may benefit mostly from reading, while others may benefit mainly from pictures, diagrams and charts. In the same vein, some auditory learners may favor mainly from listening to lectures or tapes while others may benefit mostly from discussions and group activities.

The second clarification is related to kinesthetic and tactile learners. According to Kinsella (1995), although these learners are usually referred to as being the same, they may differ in subtle aspects. Tactile learners favor mostly from hands -- in activities such as writing, painting, and drawing, whereas kinesthetic learners benefit from complete involvement in a learning task such as visiting a museum or carrying out an interview. In the present study, for the purpose of simplification, we have joined the characteristics of the tactile and kinesthetic learners under the terminology of kinesthetic.

As far as teaching is concerned, the claim is that language pedagogy should include visual as well as verbal presentation along with writing, reading, hands-on, and complete body involvement activities. Learners should *not only* experience approaches that match their learning styles, *but also* approaches other than their preferred ones (Oxford and Ehrman, 1993). Therefore, the best approach in terms of modality strengths is a multisensory approach (Kinsella, 1995). This pedagogical claim seems to be compatible with

that of developing a balanced teaching style in order to accommodate different learners in the classroom (Felder and Henriques, 1995).

Defining Teaching styles

Research on teaching styles dates back to the 1890s and can be divided into three phases (Medley, 1972). In the first phase, students and researchers described teachers' behaviors in attempt to determine what qualities would make an effective teacher. In the second phase, rating scales were used to evaluate teachers' actions. Finally, in the third phase, teachers' behaviors were measured by instruments and correlated to student achievement (Medley, 1972).

According to Mawhinney (2002), a fourth phase seems to have emerged as a result of increasing interest in individual learning styles. In this phase, teaching style is paralleled with learning style. Several researchers (e.g. Butler, 1987; Felder and Silvermann, 1988; Dunn and Dunn, 1993) developed teaching style models which corresponded to learning style models, and described teaching styles according to the learning styles mostly addressed by teachers' practice.

Drawing on Smith (1997), Katz (1996) and Butler (1987), I shall define teaching style as a recurrent set of teachers' actions, attitudes and instructional activities that may express the way teachers interpret their roles in the classroom and differentiate one teacher from another.

Reflective Teaching

According to Mok (1994), although there has been a variety of views and positions taken towards reflection, all of them seem to agree that reflective teaching must be a cyclical process and encompass both action and critical thinking. Richards, Platt and Platt (1992) define reflective

teaching as “an approach to teaching and to teacher education which is based on the assumption that teachers can improve their understanding of teaching and the quality of their own teaching by reflecting critically on their teaching experiences” (p.312).

According to Pinheiro (2000), a reflective teacher is the one who believes that effective teaching is not achieved by following prescriptions, but through systematic reflection. A reflective approach was pursued with the two volunteer teachers participating in the present study for a longer period. In this sense, no prescriptions were provided to the teachers, and I aimed at encouraging them to build upon the theories discussed, along with their own reflections and sharing of experiences in order to guide their actions.

METHOD

The present study aims at investigating L2 teachers' teaching styles from the perspective of learning styles. In this sense, four research questions guided this study: 1) What learning styles tend to be most favored by L2 teachers' teaching styles? 2) Is there a relationship between L2 teachers' teaching styles and their own learning styles? 3) What are students' attitudes towards discussing learning styles in the classroom? and 4) What difficulties do L2 teachers face when trying to develop a balanced teaching style?

Context and participants

The data for the present study were collected at the extracurricular language courses offered by the Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC). The textbooks adopted in the English course are the New Interchange Series by Jack C. Richards, Susan Proctor and Jonathan Hull, published by Cambridge University Press. New Interchange I is used in semesters 1 and 2, New Interchange II is used in semesters

3 and 4, and New Interchange III is used in semesters 5 and 6. For the advanced levels, the textbooks adopted are the Passages Series by Chuck Sand, published by Cambridge University Press. Passages I, is used in semesters 7 and 8; and Passages II in semesters 9 and 10.

Eight teachers of four different levels of proficiency – two teachers of the beginning level, two teachers of the intermediate level, two teachers at the high intermediate level, and two teachers at the advanced level-- were observed. Out of the eight teachers, five were, at the time of data collection, students of the Graduate Program in English at UFSC. The other three were undergraduate students of Letras at UFSC.

Procedures

The data for the present study consist of (1) transcripts of classroom observation, (2) transcripts of the instructional program sessions, (3) answers of the teaching and learning style instruments applied to the teachers, and (4) answers of the questionnaires applied to the students participating in this study. The data collection consisted of three different phases. The first phase was carried out with all the teachers. The remaining phases of data collection were carried out only with the two volunteer teachers, who participated in the present study for a longer period of time. In the first phase, I carried out classroom observation with the teachers during three of their classes in order to investigate their teaching styles and identify the learning styles teachers tended to favor the most.

First, classes were audio recorded and field notes were taken on a diary. Second, the teaching style instrument was applied to each one of the teachers in order to allow for the triangulation of data. Then, the learning style instrument was applied to the teachers in order to investigate whether there was a relationship between teachers' own teaching

and learning styles. Both instruments (for assessing teaching and learning styles) contained 50 questions: 10 questions dealing with sensing/intuition, 10 dealing with feeling/thinking, 10 dealing with extraversion/introversion, 10 dealing with judging/perceiving and, finally, 10 dealing with visual/auditory/kinesthetic learning preferences. Both teaching and learning style instruments were designed based on the Kiersey and Bates' (1986) version of the MBTI (1987).

For the second phase of this investigation, two teachers were observed for a longer period. These two teachers kept being observed for three more classes, for I aimed at having a better understanding of their teaching styles. Then, they took part in a 10-hour instructional program which was divided into four meetings. The general objective of the program was to expose teachers to theories of learning and teaching styles as well as theories of reflective teaching. Thus, teachers would be provided with opportunities to share their teaching experiences and to reflect upon their own teaching styles from the perspective of learning styles.

The specific objective of the instructional program was to assign two tasks to the teachers. In task 1, teachers were supposed to approach students' learning preferences in the classroom. In task 2, teachers were supposed to try to develop a balanced teaching style in one of their classes.

In the third phase of this investigation, teachers' classes were attended during the performance of tasks 1 and 2. Task 1 was assigned during the first meeting of the instructional program. Both teachers took around two weeks to plan and perform task 1. After task 1 was carried out, a questionnaire was applied to the students in order to find out their attitudes towards teachers' attempts to approach their learning preferences.

Before carrying out task 2, teachers were supposed to apply the learning style instrument to their students. After checking the results and getting to know the different

learning styles their students had, teachers started planning task 2. After task 2 was accomplished, teachers were interviewed about their difficulties and feelings during the planning and performance of such task.

Results and Discussion

Results of the first 6 teachers investigated

In this section, I shall first present the results concerning the six teachers who were observed for three classes. The data analysis was based on their answers to the teaching and learning style instruments. These teachers have been named Colleen, Mary, Paula, Sylvia, Bill and Angela. Table 1 shows the results of the learning styles mostly addressed by the teaching styles of these six L2 teachers.

Table 1: Results of teachers' teaching styles according to learning styles mostly addressed

Teachers	Learning styles mostly favored by teachers' teaching styles				
	I / E	T/F	I / S	P/J	/ V / K
Colleen	I	T	S	P	K
Mary	balanced	F	S	P	K
Paula	E	F	I	P	K
Sylvia	E	F	I	J	A
Bill	E	F	balanced	J	A
Angela	E	T	balanced	J	V
No. of teachers favoring each learning style	1 I; 4 E; 1 bal.	2T; 4F	2 I; 2S; 2 bal.	2J; 4P	2A; 1V; 3K

I/E=Introverts/Extroverts; T/F=Thinkers/Feelers; I/S=Intuitive/Sensors; P/J=Perceivers/Judgers; A/V/K=Auditory/Visual/Kinesthetic; bal. = balanced

As can be seen in Table 1, four of the teachers tend to favor extraverts over introverts; four of the teachers tend to favor feelers over thinkers; four of the teachers tend to favor perceivers over judges; and three of the teachers tend to favor kinesthetic over auditory and visual. In addition, teachers seem to vary in their balance between favoring sensors and intuitive learners since two of the teachers favor sensors over intuitive, two favor intuitive over sensors, and two keep a balance between both learning styles. Therefore, it seems reasonable to argue that extraverts, feelers, perceivers and kinesthetic tend to be the learning styles mostly addressed among these six teachers. Moreover, there seems to be a balance in the extents sensor and intuitive learners are favored among these teachers.

The results of the analysis concerning the relationship between teachers' teaching styles and their learning styles are summarized in Table 2:

Table 2: Results of the relationship between teaching and learning styles

Teacher	Dimensions in which there is a correlation between teacher's teaching styles and their learning styles					No. of Correlated Dimensions
	I/E	T/F	I/S	P/J	A/ V/ K	
Colleen	NO	YES	YES	NO	YES	(03)
Mary	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	(04)
Paula	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	(05)
Sylvia	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	(04)
Bill	YES	NO	NO	NO	YES	(02)
Angela	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	(04)

Dimensions of teaching and learning styles: I / E =introverts/ extroverts; F/T=feelers/ thinkers; I/S=sensing/intuition; P/J=perceivers/judgers; A/V/K=auditory/visual/kinesthetic

Results in Table 2 indicate that: (1) one teacher (Bill) seems to present a correlation between teaching and learning styles in 2 of the 5 dimensions; (2) one teacher (Colleen) seems to present a correlation between teaching and learning styles in 3 of 5 the dimensions; (3) three teachers (Mary, Sylvia, and Angela) present this correlation in 4 of the 5 dimensions, and (4) one teacher (Paula) presents this correlation in all of the 5 dimensions. In other words, five out of these six teachers seem to present a correlation between their own teaching and learning styles ranging from 3 to 5 of the 5 dimensions, and only one teacher presents this correlation in 2 of the dimensions. Thus, I may argue that there seems to be a correlation between teachers' teaching styles and their learning styles. In other words, teachers seem to teach according to their own learning styles (Oxford, 1990; Kinsella, 1995). Having presented the results of these six teachers, we will focus on the results of the two teachers who were investigated for a longer period, Shellsea and Lea.

Results of the 2 remaining teachers

In analyzing Shellsea's and Lea's teaching styles, I was able to determine seven categories of patterns in teachers' procedures. These categories emerged from the analysis of classroom transcripts. The sum of all these categories constitutes teachers' recurrent set of actions, attitudes and instructional activities. In other words, all these categories together actually constitute teachers' teaching styles. The seven categories determined during these teachers' classes have been named building rapport, dealing with the speaking skill, teaching grammar, focusing on pronunciation, using the board, being attentive to students' difficulties, and carrying out pair and group work. Throughout these categories, both teachers tended to favor some learning styles over others. The learning styles mostly addressed by these two teachers have been ranked throughout the

categories analyzed in order to make it easier to visualize stronger tendencies within teachers' patterns of actions. The rank of learning styles most favored throughout the categories is summarized in Tables 3 and 4.

Table 3: Shellsea's rank of learning styles most favored throughout the categories

Learning styles	Rank of the most favored learning style throughout the categories
Feelers	6
Intuitive	4
Auditory	3
Introverts	3
Perceivers	3
Extraverts	2
Visual	1
Sensing	1

As can be seen, in Shellsea's practice, feeling learners seem to be favored 6 times throughout the 7 categories analyzed; intuitive learners are favored 4 times; auditory, introverts and perceivers are favored 3 times; extroverts are favored twice; visual and sensing are favored only once. Thus, feeling learners tend to be the ones favored to the greatest extent within the styles most addressed by Shellsea, followed by intuitive and auditory, introverts, extraverts and perceivers, whereas visual and sensing types tend to be favored to the lowest extents being present in only one moment throughout the categories analyzed. Now, I shall turn to Lea's results.

Table 4: Lea's rank of learning styles most favored throughout the 7 categories

Learning styles	Rank of the most favored learning styles throughout the categories
Extraverts	4
Thinkers	4
Visual	4
Kinesthetic	4
Sensing	3
Auditory	3
Judgers	3
Feelers	3
Intuitive	2

As displayed in Table 4, Lea's patterns indicate that extraverts, thinkers, visual and kinesthetic are favored 4 times throughout the 7 categories; feelers, sensing, auditory and judgers are favored 3 times; and intuitive learners are favored twice throughout the categories. In other words, extraverts, thinkers, visual and kinesthetic learners seem to be the styles favored the most within the ones commonly addressed by Lea, followed by feelers, sensing, auditory and judgers, whereas intuitive learners seem to be addressed to the lowest extent throughout the categories analyzed.

In brief, harmony and empathy tend to be the driving forces in Shellsea's teaching style since these are typical characteristics of a feeling preference (Lawrence, 1982), which seems to be the one most addressed within Shelsea's teaching style. In addition, subjectivity and openness to possibilities, which are typical of an intuitive preference (Lawrence, 1982), seem to be strong features in Shellsea's teaching style.

On the other hand, Lea's driving forces seem to be shared among kinesthetic, extraversion, thinking, and visual preferences. First, movement and whole body involvement,

which are the typical traits of a kinesthetic preference (Kinsella, 1995), tend to be strong in Lea's teaching style. Second, along with this feature of movement, Lea has students work in different teams, groups and pairs, which are typical traits of a preference for extraversion (Lawrence, 1982). Third, her objectiveness and emphasis on logical analysis are typical traits of a thinking preference (Lawrence, 1982). Finally, her constant board use characterizes a tendency towards a visual preference.

As regards the results obtained in the teaching style instrument, answers of both teachers' corroborate most of the results obtained in the analysis of classroom transcripts. Now, I turn to the results concerning the relationship between teachers' teaching styles and their own learning styles, which are shown in Table 5:

Table 5: Results of the relationship between teachers' teaching styles and their learning styles

Dimensions showing a correlation between teachers' teaching and learning styles						
Teachers	I/E	T/F	I/S	P/J	A/V/K	No. of Correlated Dimensions
Shellsea	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	(04)
Lea	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	(04)

Dimensions of teaching and learning styles: I / E =introverts/ extraverts; F/T=feelers/ thinkers; I/S=sensing/intuition; P/J=perceivers/judgers; A/V/K=auditory/visual/kinesthetic

As shown in Table 5, there seems to be relationship between these teachers' teaching styles and their own learning styles. These results are in line with the ones found for the six previous teachers of the present study. Thus, overall results corroborate the claim that teachers tend to

teach through the ways they best learn (Oxford, 1990; Kinsella, 1995). Now, I turn to the results of students' attitudes towards teachers' attempts to discuss learning styles in the classroom.

The first task assigned to the teachers during the instructional program of the present study required teachers to plan an informal way to approach their students concerning their learning preferences. After the task was performed, I applied a questionnaire to the students in order to find out their attitudes regarding task 1.

Shellsea prepared a speaking task in which students would have to interview one another in order to find out if they would fit the requirements of a company that was selecting new employees. The interview was divided in three parts. In the first, students had to fill up the form with their personal information. In the second part, students had to ask and answer questions about their learning preferences. The third part consisted of a psychological test.

In the second part of the task, Shellsea prepared multiple choice questions based on Jung's psychological types (1974), which had been presented to her in transparencies and hand-outs during the instructional program. In having these questions dealing with learning styles as one part of a larger task, Shellsea approached her students concerning learning styles in a more implicit way. Students took around 30 minutes to complete the interview, then, Shellsea presented the answers for the psychological test. Finally, Shellsea raised awareness about the second part of the task by stating that the answers students had presented were actually related to their learning styles. After the task was completed and all answers presented, I applied a questionnaire to the students for the purpose of checking their general attitudes towards the task.

Lea approached her students in a more explicit way. She prepared a set of four questions about students' preferences concerning the procedures she carries out in her

classes and asked students to answer and discuss the questions in pairs. Students took about 20 minutes to answer and discuss the questions. Then, I applied the questionnaire to the students in order to find out their attitudes about the task they had just performed. Table 6 summarizes the answers that students of both teachers gave in the questionnaire, which was designed for the purpose of identifying their attitudes towards teachers' attempts to discuss learning styles in the classroom.

Table 6: Students' answers

Questions	Students' answers		
	favorable	Unfavorable	neutral
1. What's your general opinion of the task?	20	0	01
2. Have you been approached about your learning styles before?	yes 01	no 20	- -
3. Do you consider important being asked about your learning styles?	yes 21	no 0	- -
4. Are you willing to contribute to future teachers regarding learning styles?	yes 21	no 0	-

Total number of students: 21

As can be seen in Table 6, students tend to present a positive attitude towards teachers' attempts to bring the issue of learning styles into the classroom. One student of Lea's has verbalized: *Acho fundamental este tipo de atividade sobre como preferimos aprender, pois assim, o aluno é colocado no núcleo da questão.* Thus, students seem to have considered relevant to talk about their learning preferences.

It is important to remark that Shellsea decided to prepare her task to talk about learning styles with the students from a theoretical framework, whereas Lea's task

was class-oriented, based on her own procedures in the classroom. This freedom teachers had in planning and performing their own tasks reinforce the idea that, although I had clear objectives in mind during the instructional program -- assignment of tasks 1 and 2 -- teachers were free to take their own decisions, thus showing that the instructional program actually pursued a reflective approach (Wallace, 1991; Richards and Lockhart, 1994). Next, I shall turn to the results concerning teachers' difficulties when trying to develop a balanced teaching style in one of their classes.

The second task assigned to the teachers during the instructional program required them to plan a class, or even only a class activity in which they would try to develop a balanced teaching style regarding any of the dimensions of Myers and Briggs' (1987) – extraversion/introversion, feeling/thinking, sensing/intuition, and judging and perceiving – or regarding Kinsella's sensorial learning styles – auditory, visual and kinesthetic.

Shellsea decided to plan an oral task in which she would keep a balance between introversion and extraversion. Students were supposed to present solutions for dilemmas. Shellsea brought a kind of toy which looked and felt like 'cold jelly' to the classroom and students had to keep the toy in their hands until they had performed their part of the task. The task was divided in two parts. In the first part, she would present a dilemma and students were given time to come up with ideas to solve the given dilemma. The task was individual; each student would have to think about different solutions for the situation. Then, they would hold the toy and present their ideas to the whole group. Indeed, this first part of the task favored introverts who benefit from thinking before acting and working alone as well as extraverts who like to share ideas with many people (Lawrence, 1982).

In the second part of the task, Shellsea presented other dilemmas, and students would have to come up with a

solution for the situation. No time for thinking was allowed; whoever had ideas would ask to hold the toy and present them to the group. The activity favored extraverts who like to act fast without much reflection, and introverts were also addressed since they would not have to hold the toy and share ideas until they felt ready to do so, thus, being allowed to think before acting (Lawrence, 1982).

As regards Shellsea's difficulties on the planning and performance of task 2, she remarks in the following interview excerpt:

Uh (...) I planned an activity for extroverted and introverted and uh (...) I have never planned my lessons according to learning styles, but I had this unconsciously (...) because I (...) I (...) try to privilege sometimes people who are very active and quiet people in the classroom I (...) intuitively I privileged them, so that's why I chose introverted and extroverted, to try to do it more consciously and the only problem I had was that I had some goals for the course because of the strike I had to finish the book in one or two classes and) then, I had this extra activity of preparing the task and (...) as I don't like to have extra activities just as extra activities or just to please the researcher ((Shellsea laughs)), I wanted my class to be all connected, so I tried to have things go smoothly so that they could not perceive that it was actually an extra activity only to find out about extroverted and introverted, so it was just like a part of my class. The activity was the same I was going to do with them, I just focused the procedures on extroverted and introverted and I think they really liked, they worked a lot. I asked them to evaluate the activity at the end, and they really enjoyed. It was difficult because I did not have much time, but the procedures themselves were not difficult at all. I even connected what I did with theories of speaking, you know, when students are allowed time for thinking they are more fluent.

As stated above, the difficulties Shellsea faced when trying to plan an activity in which extraverts and introverts would be favored were related to lack of time. She had no difficulties with the procedures themselves. Surprisingly, she was even able to make connections between theories of learning styles and studies on second language speech production related to the idea that allowing time for planning before carrying out a task reduces the amount of on-line planning during the task performance, thus, enhancing fluency (Menhert, 1998).

In addition, Shellsea stated that she used to address introverts and extraverts unconsciously and by accomplishing such task she could do it more consciously. This suggests that theories may help teachers make more informed decisions in their classes. Again, the nature of the instructional program has shown to be a reflective one since Shellsea was able to build upon the theories and sharing of experiences. According to Wallace (1991), if received knowledge is related to teachers' own reflection and practice, teachers are allowed to evaluate this knowledge and may even incorporate it to their practices. In this sense, Shellsea was able to connect the received knowledge during the instructional program to her previous experiential knowledge in order to plan and perform task 2 successfully.

Finally, she was even able to evaluate the effectiveness of her task by stating that "I think they really liked and they really worked. I asked them to evaluate the activity at the end and they really enjoyed it". This seems to indicate that Shellsea went through a reflective process during the accomplishment of task 2. Having reported Shellsea's difficulties in task 2, I turn to the discussion of Lea's difficulties on task 2.

Lea also decided to focus on extraversion and introversion, and she also decided not to favor kinesthetic as much as she usually does. However, she did not actually develop a specific language task in order to do so. Rather,

she focused on the way she carries out pair and group work in order to keep a balance between extraverts and introverts as well as in order to avoid addressing kinesthetic learners all the time. Thus, she planned her class in a way so as to allow students to work individually, in pairs, and with different people around the classroom. At some moments, she allowed students to work with the person next to them or work individually. At some other moments, she made them move and work with different classmates. Therefore, she favored introverts who like to work alone or in small groups, and extraverts who like to interact with many people (Lawrence, 1982). She did favor kinesthetic learners by asking students to move around the classroom, but not as often as she usually did in her classes. As regards Lea's difficulties concerning task 2, she stated:

I have never planned my classes thinking about learning styles before (...) but that happened because I didn't have it really clear what an introvert or extravert was, maybe auditory and kinesthetic sounded clearer to me. So, I read those tables that you gave us ((teacher is referring to the texts and hand-outs received during the instructional program)) and (...) and as I read I had the ideas, I didn't even read the others (...) I read extraverts and introverts (...) and kinesthetic and it was like a five-minute look and I already had the idea of what to do. So, it was not difficult or painful, it was just extra thinking that I had to do but once I read the theory it was easier. The problem was also because I was so behind schedule that I had to teach extra classes in order to finish the course before the strike. Well, I think my students noticed (...) I mean they did not notice I was trying to favor introverts and extraverts, but I think they (...) maybe they noticed I was different ((Lea laughs)). I mean, maybe they were feeling different because they were working alone, I didn't ask them to work in pairs all the time (...) so, that was funny.

As stated above, Lea also had problems related to lack of time for planning task 2 because she was behind schedule, the university was about to go on a strike, and she had to finish the course before it. Although she did not verbalize any pain or more serious difficulties, it seems that she was not very comfortable in trying to favor introverts and extraverts, for she stated: “Well, I think my students noticed ...maybe they noticed I was different”.

Lea also verbalized difficulties concerning lack of knowledge of the theories of learning styles when she faced the planning phase of the task. However, it seems that she was able to overcome such differences quickly after reading the theory since she stated that “It was like a five-minute look and I already had the idea of what to do”. In this sense, Lea may not have been as reflective as Shellsea during the performance of task 2. However, since she chose to address the dimensions of extraversion/introversion and tried not to address kinesthetic learners all the time, this indicates that she may have somehow reflected on the results of the analysis of her teaching style. The results of the analysis of her teaching style indicated that she tends to favor extraverts and kinesthetic to a high extent and these were the dimensions she decided to focus when trying to achieve balance during task 2.

I find it interesting to remark that the ways in which both teachers have approached the tasks seem to be related to their own learning styles. Shellsea seems to be an introvert and a feeler. Introverts tend to be more motivated towards their inner world of ideas and reflections, and feelers tend to be more subjective (Lawrence, 1982). This may explain why she may have been more reflective than Lea during the accomplishment of tasks.

Lea seems to be an extravert and a sensor. Extraverts are more motivated towards the outer world of things and actions, and sensors tend to be objective (Lawrence, 1982). This may suggest why she may not have been as reflective

as Shellsea when planning and performing task 2. She seems to have gone straight to the point regarding what she was supposed to do: “as I read I had the ideas, I didn’t even read the others (...) I read extraverts and introverts (...) and kinesthetic and it was like a five-minute look and I already had the idea of what to do”.

In sum, it seems reasonable to argue that both teachers have been able to build upon the theories and the sharing of experiences, during the instructional program, in order to accomplish the tasks. It seems also important to highlight that they seem to have relied on their own learning preferences during the accomplishments of the tasks. Therefore, I may argue that teachers do not have to make drastic changes or go against their own learning and teaching styles in the attempt to accommodate different learners.

CONCLUSION

The present study aimed at identifying (1) the learning styles mostly favored by L2 teachers’ teaching styles, (2) a possible relationship between teachers’ teaching styles and their own learning styles, (3) students’ attitudes towards discussing learning styles in the classroom, and (4) teachers’ difficulties when trying to develop a balanced teaching style.

As regards the learning styles most favored, all learning styles seem to be favored among these teachers, however, not to the same extent. Some learning styles tend to be more favored than others. In this sense, extraverts, feelers, perceivers and kinesthetic learners tend to be the learning styles most favored among these teachers. Moreover, there seems to be a balance in the extent to which sensor and intuitive learners are favored among these eight teachers.

As regards the relationship between teachers’ teaching styles and their own learning styles, only one teacher, Bill, presented a correlation in only 2 of the 5 dimensions. The

other seven teachers presented a correlation ranging from 3 to 5 of the 5 dimensions of teaching and learning styles. Thus, I may argue that there seems to be a correlation between teachers' teaching styles and their learning styles. In other words, teachers' teaching styles tend to suit their own learning styles.

In order to account for all learning styles in a more balanced way, teachers do not need to make drastic changes in their teaching styles (Felder and Henriques, 1995). After all, without effort, teachers already tend to favor some learning styles. In fact, the results of the analysis of the eight teachers' teaching styles indicate that teachers already frequently favor at least four learning styles -- extraverts, feelers, perceivers and kinesthetic. Therefore, what they need to do in order to achieve a balanced teaching style is to incorporate more learning tasks which will match the learning styles less frequently favored – introverts, thinkers, visual and auditory.

One key point in trying to account for learning styles in a more balanced way is to raise teachers' awareness of their own teaching and learning styles. Kinsella (1995) remarks that without fundamental awareness of their own preferences, it is likely that teachers will believe that the most efficient way to teach is the one which addresses their own learning styles. In the present study, results seem to be in line with the idea that teachers seem to teach in the ways they best learn. After raising awareness of their own learning and teaching preferences, teachers should, then, turn to learners' preferences so as to account for different learning styles in the classroom.

As regards learners' attitudes towards discussing learning styles in the classroom, in both teachers' groups, students presented a positive attitude towards teachers' attempts to raise awareness of learning styles in the classroom. Learners seem to be willing to contribute to future teachers who may have an interest to bring the issue of learning styles

to the classroom. In this sense, teachers who wish to develop a more balanced teaching style seem to have open doors.

In respect to teachers' difficulties concerning the task of trying to develop a balanced teaching style, both teachers seem to have been able to benefit from their experience in the instructional program in order to accomplish such task, and they seem to have accomplished this task by relying on their own learning preferences. The difficulties reported by teachers were lack of time for planning the classes and lack of knowledge of learning style theories.

In relation to planning classes, it should no longer be ignored that planning is a teacher's task. It is a hard task which requires time and effort. Thus, teachers should be provided the time for planning their classes and they should be paid for it, as well. In respect to having knowledge of theories, I believe theories may help teachers make more informed decisions about teaching. According to Claxton and Murrell (1987), learning about learning is an empowering experience for both teachers and learners. These researchers claim that information about learning styles may lead to educational improvement if teachers and students are willing to learn about "how the learner learns, how the teacher teaches and how each can adapt to the other in the service of more effective teaching" (Claxton and Murrell, 1987, p.54).

The present study is limited concerning the number of participants and short period of investigation. In addition, the questionnaires to appreciate teaching and learning styles were not statistically validated. Working with a larger number of participants for a longer period of time and using validated instruments would certainly bring more enlightening results to the purposes of the study of teaching and learning styles. Despite its limitations, I believe the present study may shed some light on the issue of individual differences in the L2 classroom.

I believe *awareness* may be the most precious advantage that information about learning and teaching styles may bring to us. Kinsella (1995) claims that if learners are led to develop awareness of their own learning preferences, strengths and weaknesses, and if teachers are engaged in fostering a classroom environment that accounts for individual differences, empowerment will be likely to take place since the responsibility for learning will be shared between teachers and learners.

I share Eliason's (1995) position when she states that the most important contribution that information of learning styles may bring to us should not be the one of labeling students or teachers as either visual, kinesthetic, extravert or intuitive types. Rather, the most relevant contribution should be the one of helping us become able to "acknowledge and celebrate the various types and processes we and our students bring to the classroom, while continuing to both accommodate *and* diverge" (Eliason, 1995, p.33). In this respect, I hope the present study is a seed in the attempt to raise awareness that we teach an L2, but, first of all, we teach people, and people are different. Thus, as educators, it is our task to reflect and search for ways in which such differences can somehow accommodate *and* diverge effectively in our classrooms.

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Título: *Uma questão de estilo: investigando estilos de ensino de professores de L2 sob a perspectiva de estilos de aprendizagem*

Resumo: *Este estudo investiga quais estilos de aprendizagem tendem a ser mais favorecidos pelos professores de L2, a relação entre os estilos de ensino dos professores de L2 e seus próprios estilos de aprendizagem, as reações dos alunos quanto a discutir sobre seus estilos de aprendizagem e as dificuldades encontradas pelos professores ao tentarem acomodar diferentes alunos. Os participantes foram oito professores dos cursos Extracurriculares da Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC). Os dados foram coletados através de observação de sala de aula, questionários, uma sessão reflexiva e uma entrevista. Os resultados indicam que alunos extrovertidos e sinestésicos estão entre os mais favorecidos, os professores tendem a ensinar de acordo com seus próprios estilos de aprendizagem, os alunos estão abertos para discutir sobre seus estilos de aprendizagem e os professores identificam a carência de tempo para planejar aulas como uma das dificuldades ao tentarem acomodar diferentes aprendizes em sala de aula.*

Palavras-chave: *estilos de aprendizagem; estilos de ensino; ensino; equilíbrio.*