

Odnos između stilova učenja i strategija učenja vokabulara

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Diplomski studij engleskog jezika i književnosti-nastavnički smjer i
njemačkog jezika i književnosti-nastavnički smjer

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Mentor: prof.dr.sc. Višnja Pavičić Takač

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**The relationship between language learning styles and vocabulary
learning strategies**

Master's Thesis

Supervisor: Professor Višnja Pavičić Takač

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Summary

Language learning styles are ways, while language learning strategies are instruments in which an individual acquires and retains information. Both styles and strategies play major roles in language learning. Each person has a certain way of learning and retaining information. By investigating the relationship between language learning styles and language learning strategies, teachers get an insight which strategy fits what style best. If we knew which style corresponds to what strategy, it would be easier to instruct students and help them acquire information easier.

This research focuses on the relationship between language learning styles and vocabulary learning strategies. The results suggest that there is a relationship between certain language learning styles and vocabulary learning strategies.

Keywords: styles, strategies, vocabulary, language learning

Sažetak

Stilovi učenja su načini, dok su strategije učenja instrumenti kojima pojedinac stiče i zadržava određene informacije. Stilovi i strategije učenja imaju važnu ulogu u učenju stranog jezika. Svaka osoba ima određen način učenja i pamćenja informacija. Istraživanjem veze između stilova i strategija učenja, učitelji imaju uvid koja strategija odgovara kojem stilu učenja. Ako nastavnik zna koji se stil slaže s kojom strategijom učenja, lakše može uputiti učenike i time im pomoći u učenju novih informacija.

Fokus je ovog istraživanja povezanost stilova učenja i strategija učenja vokabulara. Rezultati istraživanja ukazuju na povezanost nekih stilova i strategija učenja vokabulara.

Ključne riječi: stilovi, strategije, vokabular, učenje jezika

1. Introduction

Since the mid 1970s, there has been substantial growth in the literature on learning styles, on learning strategies and on the relationship between learning styles and strategies (Wong and Nunan, 2011). Learning styles are the preferences of individuals with respect to how they learn while learning strategies, unlike learning styles, can be learned and consciously applied in different learning situations (Wintergerst et al., 2001). Reid (1998) theorized that whereas learning styles are internally based traits, often not perceived or consciously used by learners, learning strategies are external skills often used consciously by students to facilitate their learning.

Compared with learning strategies, learning styles are relatively stable characteristics which learners bring to the learning situations. Jie and Xiaoqing (2006) stated that the relationship between learning styles and strategies will bring more fruitful results to both fields and would benefit to learning and teaching. According to Shi (2011) once learners get to know their style preferences, it may be easier for them to see why they prefer using certain learning strategies and not others, and this awareness would help learners develop the flexibilities to cope with different learning contexts and ultimately achieve learner autonomy. In recent years, research in applied linguistics has paid more attention to learners' learning styles and learning strategies which are important factors that influence the process and outcomes of learning (Shi, 2011).

The first part of this paper gives a theoretical backdrop for the practical part. Language learning styles and language learning strategies and their classifications are discussed in detail.

The second part of the paper gives a review of other studies that have dealt with the relationship between language learning styles and language learning strategies.

The third part reports on the research conducted to explore the relationship between learning styles and vocabulary learning strategies among EFL learners.

2. Language learning styles

2.1. Definitions

Learning is essentially a matter of creating meaning from the real activities of daily living (Stein, 1998). Felder and Silvermann (1988) claimed that students learn in many ways— by seeing and hearing; reflecting and acting; reasoning logically and intuitively; memorizing and visualizing and drawing analogies and building mathematical models; steadily and in fits and starts. During the past decade, educational research has identified a number of factors that account for some of the differences in how students learn.

One of these factors are learning styles. They are broadly described as “cognitive, affective, and physiological traits that are relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive, interact with, and respond to the learning environment” (Keefe, 1979, as cited in Reid, 1987). Lawrence (1984, as cited in Oxford, 1987) had a similar definition. He argued that the term learning style is used to encompass four aspects of the person:

- 1) cognitive style, i.e., preferred or habitual patterns of mental functioning
- 2) patterns of attitudes and interests that affect what an individual will pay most attention to in a learning situation
- 3) a tendency to seek situations compatible with one's own learning patterns
- 4) a tendency to use certain learning strategies and avoid others.

“There is general acceptance that the manner in which individuals choose to or are inclined to approach a learning situation has an impact on performance and achievement of learning outcomes” (Cassidy, 2004:420). According to Dunn et al. (2002) research on learning styles has been conducted at more than 60 universities over the past decade, where investigations have yielded useful findings about the effects of environmental, emotional, sociological, physiological, and cognitive preferences on the achievement of students. “Whilst—and perhaps because—learning style has been the focus of such a vast number of research and practitioner-based studies in the area, there exist a variety of definitions, theoretical positions, models, interpretations and measures of the construct” (Cassidy, 2004:420).

Educators have been aware that individuals learn in a unique way (Yassin and Almasri, 2015). Therefore Gallagher and Nunn (1998, as cited in Yassin and Almasri, 2015) compared learning

styles with human fingerprints. They claimed that a learning style is very unique and because of that can be compared to a fingerprint.

Shaughnessy (1998, as cited in Yassin and Almasri, 2015) defined learning styles as a method that students use to focus on, process, and analyze new difficult tasks, information, skills. According to Shaughnessy (1998, as cited in Yassin and Almasri, 2015) learning styles of individuals are controlled by age, achievement level, cultural background, individual's method of analysis, and gender.

Kolb (1984, as cited in Coffield et al. 2004) on the other hand claimed that 'learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping experience and transforming it.

Reid (1998) theorized that learning styles are internally based characteristics, often not perceived or consciously used by learners, for the intake and comprehension of new information.

Dunn (1984, as cited in Coffield et al.2014) believes that style is (in the main) biologically imposed, with the implication that styles are relatively fixed and that teaching methods should be altered to accommodate them.

Sternberg (1994, as cited in Kaminska, 2014) on the other hand believes that styles are not permanently determined at birth. In his opinion, they seem to be function of the environment, tasks and situations, and can be developed. They may also differ across situations and stages of life, but environmental reinforcement does play a role in their shaping: Certain tasks are more optimally performed with certain styles.

According to Dunn (1984, as cited in Kaminska) it has not been fully settled yet whether learning styles are determined biologically or environmentally. Some research indicates that certain elements of learning styles are influenced by genetics, while others by life experience. For instance, a person's preference for intake of food or the need of dim or bright light while studying is almost certainly biological. On the other hand, it can be speculated that a sociological preference for studying in a group could be determined by previous experiences. To make it more complicated, research has shown that children can be more different than similar from their parents when it comes to language learning styles. Even siblings differ among themselves.

Coffield et al. (2004) theorized that conflicting assumptions about learning underpin mainstream ideas about learning and the best-known models of learning styles. Furthermore, some theories

derive from research into brain functioning, where claims are made that specific neural activity related to learning can be identified in different areas of the brain, while other influential ideas derive from established psychological theories, such as personality traits, intellectual abilities and fixed traits which are said to form learning styles.

2.2. Learning style models

2.2.1. Classification

In their review of research and theoretical approaches to learning styles, Coffield et al (2004) tried to make a continuum which illustrates the development of models and approaches through the years.

Table 1: Families of learning styles (source: Coffield et al., 2004:10)

Learning styles and preferences are largely constitutionally based including the four modalities: VAKT.	Learning styles reflect deep-seated features of the cognitive structure, including patterns of ability.	Learning styles are one component of a relatively stable personality type .	Learning styles are flexibly stable learning preferences.	Move on from learning styles to learning approaches, strategies, orientations and conceptions of learning.
Dunn and Dunn Gregorc Bartlett Betts Gordon Marks Paivio Richardson Sheehan Torrance	Riding Broverman Cooper Gardner <i>et al.</i> Guilford Holzman and Klein Hudson Hunt Kagan Messick Pettigrew Witkin	Apter Jackson Myers-Briggs Epstein and Meier Harrison- Branson Miller	Allinson and Hayes Herrmann Honey and Mumford Kolb Felder and Silverman Hermanussen, Wierstra, de Jong and Thijssen Kaufmann Kirton McCarthy	Entwistle Sternberg Vermunt Biggs Conti and Kolody Grasha- Riechmann Hill Marton and Saljo Pask Pintrich, Smith, Garcia and McEachie Schmeck Weinstein, Zimmerman and Palmer Whetton and Carneron

They assigned particular models of learning styles to what they call “families“(see: Table 1). It enabled them to put order in 71 apparently separate approaches. To the left-hand end of the continuum, they have placed those theorists with strong beliefs about the influence of genetics on fixed, inherited traits and about the interaction of personality and cognition (Coffield et al. 2004).

According to Coffield et al. (2004) Dunn and Dunn’s model acknowledges external factors, where preferences identified in the model are rooted in ideas that styles should be worked with rather than changed. Moving along the continuum, learning styles models are based on the idea of dynamic interplay between self and experience. Theorists placed at the right-hand end of the continuum, pay greater attention to personal factors such as motivation, and environmental factors like cooperative or individual learning- as well as the effects of curriculum design, institutional and course culture and teaching and assessment tasks on how students choose or avoid particular learning strategies.

Kaminska (2014) on the other hand made a distinction according to the complexity of the models: Simple Learning Style Models, Compound Learning Style Models, and Complex Learning Style Model. The Simple Learning Style Model consists of styles such as field dependence/independence, transfer/interference, convergent/divergent thinking. Compound Learning Style Models are more complex and consist of Kolb’s, Ehrman’s and Willing’s models. The Complex Learning Style Model consists of the most complex approaches which are: Perceptual styles and the Dunn/Dunn model.

Cohen and Weaver (2006, as cited in Cohen, 2014) made a list of three categories of style preferences that are considered useful to understanding the process of language learning (Table 2).

Table 2: Sensory/perceptual, cognitive and personality-related preferences (source: Cohen and Weaver 2006, as cited in Cohen 2010:163)

Sensory/perceptual style preferences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being more visual, more auditory, or more tactile/kinaesthetic (hands-on)
Cognitive style preferences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being more abstract-intuitive or more concrete-sequential • Being more synthesizing or more analytic • Being more global or more detail-oriented • Being more inductive or deductive
Personality-related style preferences

- Being more extroverted or more introverted
- Being more abstract and intuitive or more concrete and prone to thinking in step-by-step sequence
- Preferring to keep all options open or being more closure-oriented

It can be seen that a lot of effort and time was invested into putting these classifications in order, but for the purpose of this study perceptual styles will be discussed in more detail.

2.3. Perceptual styles

“Perceptual modality preferences refer to the learner’s tendency to use the different sensory models to understand experience” (Kaminska, 2014, 71). Even though there seems to be an agreement on which three perceptual modalities play a major role in learning, they have been differently conceptualized by researchers (Kaminska, 2014) (see Table 3).

Table 3: Selected categories of Perceptual Learning Styles (adapted from Eliason 1995:20, cited in Kaminska, 2014)

Year	Author(s)	Categories
1975	Dunn, Dunn and Price	Visual, auditory, tactile, kinaesthetic
1976	Reiner	Visualization, written word, sound-understanding, feeling
1979	Keefe	Kinaesthetic/psychomotor, visual/spatial, auditory/verbal
1984	Friedman and Alley	Auditory linguistic, visual linguistic, auditory numerical, visual numerical, auditory-visual-kinaesthetic combination, oral expressive, written expressive
1985	James and Galbraith	Print, visual, interactive (verbalization), olfactory
1989	O’Brien	Visual, auditory, haptic

According to Reid (1987), Dunn (1983) and Dunn and Dunn (1979) have reported on Perceptual Learning Styles, a term that describes the variations among learners in using one or more senses to

understand, organize, and retain experience. Research with U.S. school children (R. Dunn, 1983, 1984; Reinert, 1976, as cited in Reid, 1987) has demonstrated that learners have four basic perceptual learning channels (or modalities):

1. Visual learning: reading, studying charts
2. Auditory learning: listening to lectures, audiotapes
3. Kinaesthetic learning: experiential learning, that is, total physical involvement with a learning situation
4. Tactile learning: “hands-on” learning, such as building models or doing laboratory experiments

Although Dunn and Reinert introduced these four basic perceptual learning channels, Kaminska (2014) stated that Reid was the first to deal with learning style preferences of non-native speakers of English with the prospect of providing insight for the ESL classroom. By designing her own questionnaire, she was able to determine her subjects’ (non-native speakers of English studying at American universities) major, minor and negative preferences for visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, tactile, individual and group learning styles (Kaminska, 2014).

Reid (1995, as cited in Karthigeyan and Nirmala, 2013) has developed PLSPQ (see appendix) particularly for learners of foreign language based on how students learn best using their perceptions: visual, auditory and kinaesthetic preferences and also two social aspects of learning: group and individual preferences.

The classification is listed below (Karthigeyan and Nirmala, 2013):

- 1) Visual: Visual students like to read and obtain information from visual stimulation. These learners prefer using pictures, imageries, and spatial perceptions. “Visual learners remember best what they see: diagrams, flow charts, time lines, films, demonstrations. If something is simply said to them they will probably forget it“ (Felder and Silverman, 1998).
- 2) Auditory: Auditory students are comfortable without visual input and learn from unembellished lectures, conversations, and oral directions. “Auditory learners remember much of what they hear and more of what they hear and then say. They get a lot out of discussion, prefer verbal explanation to visual demonstration, and learn effectively by explaining things to others“(Felder and Silverman, 1998).
- 3) Kinaesthetic: Kinaesthetic students like lots of hands on movement and enjoy working. They favour using body, hands, and tactile sense.

Social Learning Styles

- 1) Group (interpersonal): They favour learning in groups or with other people.
- 2) Individual (intrapersonal): They prefer to work alone and to be a self reader.

3. Language learning strategies

3.1. Definitions

Through the past decades many researchers dealt with the terms of language learning strategies. Learning strategies are defined as "specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques-- such as seeking out conversation partners, or giving oneself encouragement to tackle a difficult language task -- used by students to enhance their own learning" (Scarcella, and Oxford,1992:63 as cited in Oxford 2003). Wenden and Rubin (1987:19, as cited in Hismanoglu, 2000) define learning strategies as "... any sets of operations, steps, plans, routines used by the learner to facilitate the obtaining, storage, retrieval, and use of information.

Reid (1998) made a distinction between language learning styles and language learning strategies. He believed that learning styles are internal skills that were acquired unconsciously, unlike learning strategies which are external skills that can be learned consciously. Furthermore, learning strategies are adopted by individuals to improve and develop their level of comprehension, whereas learning styles are internal characteristics developed in people since childhood.

Cohen (2003, as cited in Wong and Nunan 2011) and Oxford (2003) claimed that learning styles are general approaches to language learning, while learning strategies are specific ways to deal with language tasks in particular contexts.

Throughout the years many researchers gave their own definitions about language learning strategies which can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4: Definitions of Language learning strategies (source: Pavičić Takač, 2008:51)

Source	Definition
Tarone (1981)	An attempt to develop linguistic and sociolinguistic competence in the target language.
Rubin (1987)	What learners do to learn and do to regulate their learning.
Chamot (1987)	Techniques, approaches or deliberate actions that students take in order to facilitate learning, recall of both linguistic and content information.
Wenden (1987)	The term refers to language behaviours learners engage in to learn and regulate the learning of L2, to what learners know about the

strategies they use (i.e. strategic knowledge), and to what learner know about aspects of L2 learning.

Weinstein and Mayer (1986)	Behaviours and thoughts that a learner engages in during learning that are intended to influence the learner's encoding process
Oxford (1990)	Behaviours or actions which learners use to make language learning more successful, self-directed and enjoyable.
Ellis (1995)	Generally, a strategy is a mental or behavioural activity related to some specific stage in the process of language acquisition or language use.
Ridley (1997)	Broadly speaking, the term strategy denotes procedures which are sometimes conscious and sometimes unconscious used by a person as a way of reaching a goal.
Cohen (1998)	Processes which are consciously selected by learners and which may result in action taken to enhance the learning or use of a L2, through the storage, recall and application of information about that language.
Purpura (1999)	Conscious or unconscious techniques or activities that an individual invokes in language learning, use or testing.

According to Martinez (1996) at least five main features can be inferred from the literature reviewed:

- a) Strategies play an important role in second language learning as they promote and facilitate language learning
- b) Learners themselves are the actual agents in their use and choice of strategies as they are directly affected by them;
- c) Language learning, as learning in general, has to be internalized and strategies are in fact problem-solving mechanisms or techniques used by learners to cope with the complex process of learning;
- d) Learning strategies are not always observable to the human eye. This explains why foreign language teachers, in general, are not conscious of them; and

- e) Strategies are flexible and it is logical to think that they can be taught and learners can be trained in their management.

Oxford (1990:9) also made a concise list about the features of language learning strategies. She believed that strategies:

1. Contribute to the main goal, communicative competence
2. Allow learners to become more self-directed
3. Expand the role of teachers
4. Are problem-oriented
5. Are specific actions taken by the learner
6. Involve many aspects of the learner, not just the cognitive.
7. Support learning both directly and indirectly
8. Are not always observable
9. Are often conscious
10. Can be taught
11. Are flexible
12. Are influenced by a variety of factors.

Language learning strategies have been classified by many scholars (Wenden and Rubin 1987; O'Malley et al. 1985; Oxford 1990; Stern 1992; Ellis 1994, etc., as cited in Hismanoglu, 2000). However, most of these attempts to classify language learning strategies reflect more or less the same categorizations of language learning strategies without any radical changes (Hismanoglu, 2000).

3.1. Classification of language learning strategies

Rubin (1981, as cited in O'Malley and Chamot, 1990) identified two kinds of learning strategies which she labeled direct and indirect, while O'Malley et al. (1985, cited in Oxford 1990) opted for a tripartite classification system (cognitive, metacognitive, and social). Using Rubin's direct/indirect dichotomy, Oxford (1990) further subdivided strategy items in her classification into six categories: memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social.

3.1.1. Rubin's taxonomy

O'Malley and Chamot (1990) said that Rubin based her strategies on fairly extensive data collection in varied settings, which included about fifty hours of classroom observation, observation of a small group of students working on a strip story, analysis of self-reports from "a few students" instructed

to write down what they did to learn a second language, and analysis of daily journal entries of two students who were directed to report on strategies after having been given strategy examples (see Table 5).

Table 5: Rubin’s taxonomy (source: O’Malley and Chamot, 1990:4)

Groups of strategies	Subgroups of strategies
Direct strategies	1) Clarification/verification, 2) monitoring, 3) memorisation, 4) guessing/inductive inferencing, 5) deductive reasoning, 6) practice
Indirect strategies	1) Creating opportunities for practice, 2) production tricks

3.1.2. O’Malley and Chamot’s classification

O’Malley and Chamot’s (1990) classification emerged from interviews with experts and theoretical analyses of reading comprehension and problem solving. They put language learning strategies into three categories: metacognitive, cognitive and social mediation (see: Table 5).

Table 6: O’Malley & Chamot’s classification (1990, pp. 119–120)

Groups	Subgroups	Learning strategy
Metacognitive	Planning	Advance organizers, directed attention, functional planning, selective attention, self-management,
	Monitoring	Self-monitoring
	Evaluation	Self-evaluation
Cognitive	–	Resourcing, repetition, grouping, deduction, imagery, auditory representation, keyword method elaboration, transfer, interferencing, note taking, summarizing, recombination, translation
Social mediation	Question for clarification	
	Cooperation	

O'Malley and Chamot (1990) theorized that meta-cognitive strategies involve “knowing about learning and controlling learning through:

- 1) planning - advance organizers, directed attention, functional planning, selective attention and self-management)
- 2) monitoring (checking, verifying, or correcting one's comprehension or performance in the course of language task)
- 3) evaluating the learning activity (checking the outcomes of one's own language learning against a standard after it has been completed)

On the other hand, cognitive strategies involve manipulation or transformation of the material to be learned, while social/affective strategies mainly involve the learner in communicative interaction with another person.

3.1.3. Oxford classification

Oxford's classification is regarded as the most comprehensive classification and has been used by many researchers (Ellis 1994, as cited in Tam 2013). Oxford (1990) divides language learning strategies into two main classes, direct and indirect, which are further subdivided into 6 groups. Direct strategies are those behaviours involving direct use of the language; memory strategies for entering information into memory and retrieving it; cognitive strategies for manipulating the language for reception and production of meaning; and compensation strategies for overcoming limitations in existing knowledge. While, indirect strategies support language learning although they do not directly involve using the language; metacognitive strategies for organizing and evaluating learning; affective strategies for managing emotions and attitudes; and social strategies for learning with others. The structure of the SILL is based on Oxford's system for classifying strategies into six groups:

1. affective strategies for anxiety reduction, self-encouragement, and self-reward
2. social strategies such as asking questions, cooperating with native speakers, and becoming culturally aware
3. metacognitive strategies for evaluating one's progress, planning for language tasks, consciously searching for practice opportunities, paying attention, and monitoring errors
4. memory- related strategies, such as grouping, imagery, rhyming, moving physically, and reviewing in a structured way
5. general cognitive strategies, such as reasoning, analyzing, summarizing, and practicing (including but not limited to “active use of the language) and

6. compensatory strategies (to make up for limited knowledge), such as guessing meanings from context and using synonyms and gestures to convey meaning

4. Vocabulary learning strategies

During the past decade, researchers have pointed to the importance of vocabulary acquisition for second language (L2) learners (Lawson, and Hogben 1996). “Words are the building blocks of a language since they label objects, actions, ideas without which people cannot convey the intended meaning” (Hatch & Brown, 1995, as cited in Ghazal, 2007).

According to Richards (1976, as cited in Ghazal, 2007) knowing a word involves knowing:

- a great deal about its general frequency of use, syntactic and situational limitations on its use
- its underlying form and the forms that can be derived from it
- the network of its semantic features and
- the various meanings associated with the item.

“Vocabulary learning strategies are activities, behaviours, steps or techniques used by learners (often deliberately) to facilitate vocabulary learning“(Pavičić-Takač, 2008:115). Pavičić Takač (2008) claimed that these strategies can help learners to discover lexical items (both their meaning and form), and to internalise, store, retrieve and actively use these in language production.

Graves (1987, as cited in Lawson and Hogben, 1996) suggested that, because students actually do most of their learning of new words independently, it makes sense to encourage them “to adopt personal plans to expand their vocabularies over time”.

Gu (2003) on the other hand claimed that strategies a learner uses and the effectiveness of these strategies depend on the learner him/herself (e.g., attitudes, motivation, prior knowledge), the learning task at hand (e.g., type, complexity, difficulty, and generality), and the learning environment (e.g., the learning culture, the richness of input and output opportunities).

Nation (2001), defined vocabulary learning strategies according to the following important features:

- 1) they involve choice;
- 2) they are complex, i.e. consisting of several steps;
- 3) they require knowledge and benefit from training; and
- 4) they increase the efficiency of vocabulary learning and use.

The importance and popularity of vocabulary learning strategies in the group of language learning strategies in terms of their actual use is reflected by the fact that the vast majority of language learning strategies listed in taxonomies such as in Oxford (1990)’s, are either vocabulary learning

strategies (all strategies in the memory category), or can be used for vocabulary learning tasks. Many researchers proposed their taxonomies in the area of vocabulary learning strategies. Nation at all (2001) proposed rather diverse vocabulary learning strategy taxonomy (Table 7).

Table 7: TAXONOMY OF KINDS OF VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGIES (source: Nation at all, 2001:353)

General class of strategies	Types of strategies
Planning: Choosing what to focus on and when to focus on it	Choosing words word knowledge Choosing the aspects of strategies Planning repetition
Sources: Finding information about words	Analysing the word Using context Consulting a reference source in L1 or L2 Using parallels in L1 and L2
Processes: Establishing knowledge	Noticing Retrieving Generating

For the purpose of this study Pavičić Takač's classification will be discussed. Pavičić-Takač (2008) proposed a new classification of vocabulary learning strategies, after factor analyses revealed three components referring to three different aspects of vocabulary learning which were labeled as:

1. FORMAL VOCABULARY LEARNING strategies of rote vocabulary memorisation, reliance on L1, and a metacognitive aspect of regular and planned revision; component 2 was labelled
2. INDEPENDENT VOCABULARY LEARNING strategies of exposure to the target language and those strategies that reveal an elaborated approach to vocabulary study that includes the use of memory strategies; component 3 was labelled
3. INCIDENTAL VOCABULARY LEARNING strategies of spontaneous vocabulary learning in naturalistic learning situations as well as communication strategies.

5. Review of research on relationship between language learning styles and language learning strategies

According to Oxford and Nam (1998), learning strategy choices are often connected to the preferred learning style. That means that a student who has a strongly visual learning style tends to use the strategies of taking notes and outlining, whereas an auditory learner tends to use strategies such as recording lectures and listening to them afterwards. Oxford (1991, as cited in Nian-nian 2012) stressed the importance of recognizing one's own learning style and finding the most style-comfortable strategies.

Research findings have suggested an association between language learning strategy use and learning style preferences. Researchers have found a statistical link between students' L2 learning strategies and their underlying learning styles (Ehrman & Oxford, 1990; Ely, 1989)

Rossi-Le (1989, as cited in Nian-nian 2012) found significant relationships between perceptual learning style (visual, auditory, tactile, and kinaesthetic) and strategy use for 7 out of 10 strategy categories. Auditory learners preferred memory strategies, cognitive strategies for authentic language use, and metacognitive strategies such as planning and evaluating their own learning. However, tactile learners revealed a strong preference for using strategies for communicating meaning and for self-management.

Al-Hebaishi (2012) investigated the correlation between language learning styles and language learning strategies. He used two instruments for getting these results: Reid's questionnaire "The Language Style Preferences Questionnaire" and "The Strategy Inventory for Language Learning SILL" (Oxford [7] Version 7.0). According to the results visual learning styles had significant correlations with memory and affective strategies. Visual learners preferred using a wide variety of memory strategies like: creating mental linkage, applying images and sounds, reviewing and employing actions.

Visual learners used memory strategies effectively to link the visual with the verbal, which is useful for the following reasons:

- The mind's capacity for storage of visual information exceeds its capacity for storage of verbal material.

- The most efficiently packaged chunks of information are transferred to long-term memory through visual images.
- Visual images might be the most effective mean to aid recall of verbal material

(Al-Hebaishi, 2012)

The second significant correlation that was found was between visual learning styles and affective strategies. According to Al-Hebaishi (2012) visual learners used techniques such as: strengthening motivation, raising self confidence, reducing anxiety, increasing feelings of satisfaction, which helped them get better control over their emotions towards learning.

Results of Jie and Xiaoqing's study (2006) revealed that a particular style is always positively related to the strategies that "fall into their own types". That means, extraverts are inclined to use practicing, overcoming limitations in speaking, lowering anxiety and cooperation strategies, while intuitive learners prefer summarizing. The results are consistent with other researchers who reported that for adult learners, learning styles appear to have a significant influence on their strategy choices.

Jafarpanah and Farahian (2016) investigated the relationship between language learning styles and metacognitive reading strategies. For this research two surveys were used. The first one was designed by Cohen, Oxford and Chi (2001) which includes 11 sections, 23 subscales and 110 items. The second was the Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategies Inventory (MARSI) developed by Mokhtari and Reichard (2002). According to the findings of Jafarpanah and Farahian (2016) there was a positive relationship between thirteen learning styles (visual, auditory, introvert, intuitive, concrete, closure, synthesizing, analytic, sharpener, deductive, f-independent, and reflective) and using metacognitive reading strategy in FL reading.

Hsueh-Jui (2008) investigated the relationship between listening styles and listening strategies. For example, Hsueh-Jui (2008) used two questionnaires to determine the relationship between these two variables. The first one is the strategy survey, which contained 34 statements (mainly drawn from Vandergrift 1997). The second was a questionnaire which was designed by Willing (1993) and Nunan (1996) comprised 24 items with four types of learning styles

- 1) communicative (e.g., watching TV in English or using English in shops)
- 2) authority-oriented (e.g., studying grammar, or through a teacher leading to learning),
- 3) concrete (e.g. learning through games, or using cassettes)
- 4) analytical (i.e., studying alone)

According to Hsueh-Jui (2008) results showed a statistically significant relationship between listening styles and listening strategies use. Communicative learners were flexibly deploying all strategies when performing listening tasks. Authority-oriented learners preferred cognitive strategies, while concrete learners preferred social/affective strategies more. Analytical learners preferred cognitive techniques.

As it can be seen from previous studies, a significant correlation between certain styles and strategies was proven. This study has the aim to prove the relationship between language learning styles and vocabulary learning strategies. Wilkins (1972, 111-112) said that” ... while without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed”. This means that vocabulary is essential in learning a language.

Vocabulary learning can sometimes become an obstacle in acquiring a language, because students often struggle with retaining information. In most cases they aren't aware of how to remember them more easily. By finding out which strategy suits which style best, teachers could better instruct their students and help them overcome their problems.

6. Experimental part

6.1. Aim and purpose

The ultimate aim of this research was to explore whether there was a relationship between language learning styles and vocabulary learning strategies and whether gender plays a role in the language learning style preferences and vocabulary learning strategy use. The following were the research questions:

- 1) What is the most preferred language learning style among Elementary school students?
- 2) Is there a difference between the use of vocabulary strategies between male and female students?
- 3) Is there a relationship between language learning styles and vocabulary learning strategies?

6.2. Sample

A total of 240 elementary school learners of three different levels (6th, 7th and 8th grade) and from three different schools (two schools from Bosnia and Herzegovina and one school from Croatia) participated in this study. From Table 8 it is evident that the sample consisted of almost the same number of female and male students.

Table 8: Participants

School	Gender		Grade		
	Male	Female	6 th	7 th	8 th
OŠ "Sveti Franjo" Tuzla	59	60	49	39	41
OŠ "Matija Antun Reljković" Cerna	22	20	0	42	0
OŠ "Kreka" Tuzla	29	40	27	11	31
Total	110	120	76	92	72

6.3. Instruments and procedure

This research was conducted by using two questionnaires (see appendix). The first questionnaire was the Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire (PLSPQ) by Reid (1998) and the second one was the Vocabulary Learning Strategy Questionnaire for Elementary Schools (VOLSQES) created by Pavičić Takač (2008).

Reid's PLSPQ was used in order to determine student's language learning styles. The questionnaire consisted of 30 items which were later on put into six groups: Visual (items:6, 10, 12, 24, 29), Auditory (items: 1, 7, 9, 17, 20), Kinaesthetic (items: 2, 8, 15, 19, 26), Tactile (items:11, 14, 16, 22, 25), Individual (items: 13, 18, 27, 28, 30) and Group (items: 3, 4, 5, 21, 23). A five-point Likert scale was used (1-strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3-undecided, 4-agree, 5-strongly agree). The reliability measured by Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.75.

Pavičić Takač's VOLSQES determined students' language learning strategies. The questionnaire consisted of 27 items which were put into three categories: Formal, independent and incidental vocabulary learning. A Likert-type scale was used (1-never, 2-sometimes, 3-always). The reliability measured by Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.83.

Both questionnaires were written in the native tongue of the participants, which was Croatian. The PLSPQ could only be found in the English language so it had to be translated by the researcher. The questionnaires were conducted during regular English classes by their teachers. Participants were asked to answer as quickly as possible without giving much thought. The average time needed to complete the questionnaires was 15 minutes.

6.4. Results

Descriptive statistics showed that the most frequent language learning style among elementary school students was auditory with the mean value of 3.77, and the least frequent was tactile with the mean value of 3.23. The kinaesthetic style also scored very high, almost like auditory. The results in Table 9 are listed from the most frequent one.

Table 9: Language learning style ranking

	Mean	St.dev.
Auditory	3.77	.747
Kinaesthetic	3.75	.738
Visual	3.45	.789
Individual	3.34	.974
Group	3.31	1.05
Tactile	3.22	.869

The independent T-test was run in order to test if there was a difference in use of vocabulary learning strategies between females and males. The results showed that there was no statistically significant difference between the two groups (see Table 3).

Table 10: The use of vocabulary learning strategies according to gender

	Mean		t	Sig.
	male	female		
Formal vocabulary learning	2.16	2.18	.377	.706
Independent vocabulary learning	1.98	1.92	-1.09	.274
Incidental vocabulary learning	2.30	2.39	.435	.664

The Pearson correlation was used to explore the relationship between language learning styles and vocabulary learning strategies. From Table 11 it is evident that there is a significant relationship between certain language learning styles and vocabulary learning strategies. Tactile learning style correlates significantly with all three groups of vocabulary learning strategies. The only language

learning style that showed no significant relationship to vocabulary learning strategy was the group style.

Table 11: Relationship between language learning styles and vocabulary learning strategies

	Formal vocabulary learning	Independent vocabulary learning	Incidental vocabulary learning
Visual	0.225**	0.113	0.184**
Kinaesthetic	0.128	0.176**	0.265**
Tactile	0.260***	0.257***	0.250***
Group	0.018	0.096	0.029
Individual	0.178**	0.082	0.095
Auditory	-0.023	0.047	0.156*

***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05

Group style isn't in a correlation with any strategy. From this, it can only be concluded that there doesn't exist a linear connection between group style and these three strategies. However, tactile styles show statistically significant positive correlation with all the strategies, which means that tactile students who prefer that style more, will benefit more from all the strategies listed. Auditory style showed a statistically significant, but weak, correlation only with incidental strategy which means that in an auditory group of students, students would benefit more from incidental strategies if they preferred auditory style more. This would mean that students, who are more auditory, would get the most from incidental strategies. For the other two strategies we cannot adopt such conclusion.

6.5. Discussion

The study showed that the most frequent styles used by elementary school students were auditory and kinaesthetic. This was somewhat expected because children at that age tend to use these styles because of their playfulness and constant movement. Price et al. (1980, as cited in Reid, 1987) found that very young children are the most tactile/kinaesthetic. They argued that there was a gradual development of visual strengths through the elementary grades, and that information can only be retained through auditory sense at the fifth grade. A surprising fact was the advantage of the

individual style towards the group style, because individual styles tend to be more frequent in adults.

In terms of gender, no statistical evidence was found that showed a difference in use of vocabulary learning strategies between females and males. A possible explanation would be that the participants were elementary school students. Some studies (eg. Zeynali, 2012; Božinović, and Sindik, 2011) where participants were college students showed differences in use of vocabulary learning strategies between male and female students.

As the findings revealed, there was significant positive relationship between certain language learning styles and vocabulary learning strategies. Formal vocabulary learning significantly correlated with visual, tactile and individual styles, while independent vocabulary learning correlated with kinaesthetic and tactile. From all the strategies, incidental vocabulary learning correlated with most styles: visual, kinaesthetic, tactile and auditory.

The correlation of formal vocabulary strategies and individual learning styles was rather expected. Pavičić Takač (2008) claimed that formal learners are oriented to concrete formal language learning tasks which are repeating lexical items and testing themselves, and they will opt for those vocabulary learning strategies which would help attain their personal goal. Another expected result was the correlation between the kinaesthetic style and incidental vocabulary strategies. Pavičić Takač (2008) said that incidental learning strategies contain strategies of spontaneous vocabulary learning in naturalistic learning situations. This corresponds to kinaesthetic which are described as “natural discovery learners; they have realizations through doing, rather than thinking about a task prior to beginning”.

It is interesting that the most favoured style which was auditory only correlated with one strategy which was incidental vocabulary strategies. While the least favoured style which was tactile, correlated with all the strategies.

These findings have great value for further studies. A great addition to this study would be a research with the same topic but different participants. It would be interesting to get college students to participate and see a possible development of the relationship between language learning styles and vocabulary learning strategies. Maybe in an older age the connection of language learning styles and vocabulary learning strategies would be different.

7. Conclusion

This research was conducted in order to determine whether there was a relationship between language learning styles and vocabulary learning strategies. Language learning styles and vocabulary learning strategies have a major role in second language acquisition.

Results showed that elementary school students when it comes to perceptual learning styles favour auditory and kinaesthetic styles. In contrast to other studies, results showed that individual styles are more favoured than the group style. When it comes to the difference between male and female students, no evidence was found that supports that statement.

Besides these results, the focus of this study was to determine the relationship between language learning styles and vocabulary learning strategies. It was established that there was a significant relationship between language learning styles and vocabulary learning strategies. Five out of six styles correlated with at least one strategy. Only group style had no significant correlation with either style.

However, the conclusion of this study may not be reliable. There are limitations to this study that need to be taken into account. Only one group of students participated in the study, who had the same age and cultural background. If the participants had different cultural backgrounds, the results could have been different.

To sum up, these results can be used to help teachers instruct students to use a vocabulary strategy that suits their students' style best. Vocabulary is extremely important in learning a foreign language. If students knew how to acquire vocabulary more easily, it would also affect their motivation and desire in learning a second language.

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Appendix

Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire

Upute:

Ljudi uče na različite načine. Npr., neki ljudi najbolje uče promatranjem (vizalni učenici) ili slušanjem (auditivni učenici); neki ljudi vole učiti kroz iskustvo (kinestetički učenici) dok neki više vole "opipljivije" zadatke (taktilni učenici); neki ljudi bolje uče dok rade samostalno, dok neki više vole učiti u grupi.

Upitnik je osmišljen na način da utvrdi upravo kako TI najbolje učiš. Nema točnih i netočnih odgovora.

Uz svaku tvrdnju ponuđena je sljedeća ljestvica:

1- u potpunosti se slažem 2- ne slažem se 3- ne znam 4- slažem se 5- u potpunosti se slažem

Odluči da li se slažeš ili ne slažeš sa pojedinom tvrdnjom i zatim označi odgovarajuće polje znakom X :

U potpunosti se ne slažem- 1

Ne slažem se- 2

Ne znam- 3

Slažem se- 4

U potpunosti se slažem- 5

Molimo te da na svaku tvrdnju odgovoriš brzo, bez mnogo razmišljanja. Pokušaj ne mijenjati odluku nakon što si je donio. Molimo te da odgovoriš na sva pitanja.

	1	2	3	4	5
	U potpu nosti se ne slaže m	Ne slaže m se	Ne znam	Slaž em se	U potpunos tisteslaže m
1. Razumijem bolje kada mi učitelj usmeno da upute.					
2. Više volim učiti tako da nešto radim na satu.					
3. Više posla uradim kad radim zajedno s drugima.					
4. Naučim više kada učim u grupi.					
5. Na satu najbolje učim kada radim s drugima.					
6. Bolje nešto naučim ako čitam ono što učitelj piše na ploči.					
7. Bolje nešto naučim ako mi netko na satu kaže kako nešto treba učiniti.					
8. Bolje učim ako nešto aktivno radim na satu.					
9. Bolje naučim ono što sam na satu čuo, nego					

ono što sam pročitao.					
10. Bolje zapamtim upute ako ih pročitam.					
11. Bolje naučim nešto ako mogu izraditi model.					
12. Bolje razumijem kada pročitam upute.					
13. Bolje pamtim kada učim samostalno.					
14. Bolje učim kada pravim nešto za školski projekt.					
15. Uživam u učenju kada na satu radimo pokuse.					
16. Bolje naučim kada crtam dok učim.					
17. Najbolje učim kada učitelj drži predavanje.					
18. Najbolje naučim kad učim sam/a.					
19. Bolje razumijem gradivo kada sudjelujem u igranju uloga u razredu.					
20. Na satu učim bolje dok slušam nekoga.					
21. Uživam raditi zadatak sa dva ili tri prijatelja iz razreda.					
22. Dok izrađujem nešto, sjetim se što sam naučio/la najbolje.					
23. Više volim učiti s drugima.					
24. Bolje naučim kad nešto čitam nego kad slušam nekoga.					

25. Uživam praviti nešto za školski projekt.					
26. Na satu učim najbolje kada mogu sudjelovati u aktivnostima.					
27. Na satu bolje radim kada radim samostalno.					
28. Više voli sam/a raditi projekte.					
29. Bolje učim čitajući iz udžbenika nego slušajući predavanje.					
30. Najviše volim raditi sam.					

Vocabulary Learning Strategy Questionnaire for Elementary Schools

Engleski jezik se može učiti na razne načine. Ovim upitnikom želimo saznati kako TI učiš riječi. Molimo te da odgovoriš onako kako ti zaista učiš, a ne kako misliš da bi trebao/la ili kako netko drugi uči. Molimo te da pažljivo i redom odgovaraš na sva pitanja i da se nakon popunjavanja više ne vraćaš na prethodna pitanja. Ne postoje točni i pogrešni odgovori.

Ukoliko ti nešto nije jasno, slobodno podizanjem ruke pozovi ispitivača.

Uz svaku tvrdnju ponuđena je sljedeća ljestvica:

1 - nikada 2 - ponekad 3 – uvijek

Na ponuđenoj ljestvici uz svaku tvrdnju zaokruži broj koji označava koliko često TI koristiš navedeni postupak. Ne postoje točni i pogrešni odgovori.

1 – nikada 2 – ponekad 3 - uvijek

- | | | | | |
|----|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Nove riječi upotrijebim u rečenici da ih zapamtim. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 2. | Kad učim riječi, ispisujem listu riječi i njihov hrvatski prijevod da lakše zapamtim što znače. | 1 | 2 | 3 |

- | | | | | |
|-----|---|---|---|---|
| 3. | Kod kuće redovito ponavljam riječi koje smo učili na nastavi. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4. | Ispitujem se da provjerim jesam li zapamtio/la nove riječi. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 5. | Primjećujem da pamtim riječi iz filmova i televizijskih programa koje gledam. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 6. | Ako se u razgovoru ne mogu sjetiti potrebne engleske riječi, koristim drugu sa sličnim značenjem. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 7. | Dok za razonodu čitam knjige ili časopise na engleskom, bilježim nove riječi. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 8. | Unaprijed napravim plan kako ću učiti riječi. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 9. | Riječ lakše mogu zapamtiti ako je vidim napisanu. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 10. | Više puta naglas izgovorim novu englesku riječ da je zapamtim. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 11. | Novu riječ u mislima povežem sa slikom značenja te riječi da je lakše zapamtim. | 1 | 2 | 3 |

12. Povezujem nove riječi s riječima koje već znam u engleskom. 1 2 3
13. Dok gledam film na engleskom, zapisujem nove riječi koje čujem. 1 2 3
14. Više puta napišem novu englesku riječ da zapamtim njezino značenje. 1 2 3
15. Prelistavam i čitam rječnik da naučim neke nove riječi. 1 2 3
16. U mislima povezujem novu riječ sa slikom napisane riječi da je bolje zapamtim. 1 2 3
17. Ako se u razgovoru ne mogu sjetiti engleske riječi, opišem je svojim riječima na engleskom. 1 2 3
18. Riječ zapamtim tako da zamislim situaciju u kojoj bi se ta riječ koristila. 1 2 3
19. Riječi prevedem na hrvatski da bih shvatio/la što znači. 1 2 3
20. Riječi pamtim tako da ih podijelim u neke grupe (npr. prema značenju ili vrsti riječi).

- | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 21. Više puta u sebi izgovorim riječ da je zapamtim. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 22. Slušam pjesme na engleskom i nastojim razumjeti riječi. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 23. Primjećujem da pamtim riječi dok čitam knjige ili časopise na engleskom. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 24. Kad učim riječi, nastojim zapamtiti dvije-tri riječi, a onda prelazim na novu skupinu od dvije-tri riječi. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 25. U mislima povezujem riječ s predmetom koji ona označava. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 26. Kad se ispitujem riječi prekrijem stupac s riječima na hrvatskom i pokušam se sjetiti engleske riječi (i obrnuto). | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 27. Primjećujem da pamtim engleske riječi s interneta. | 1 | 2 | 3 |

Molimo te da čitko popuniš i ovaj dio upitnika i da ne izostaviš niti jedno pitanje.

1. Spol (zaokruži): m – ž
2. Razred _____
3. Škola _____
4. Koliko godina ti predaje tvoja sadašnja nastavnica engleskog jezika? _____

5. Upiši svoju ocjenu iz engleskog na polugodištu ove školske godine _____

6. S koliko godina si počeo/počela učiti engleski jezik? _____