

## **The Study of the Relationship Between Kolb's Learning Model and Learning American Slang for Teaching and Learning by Iranian EFL Students**

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### **Abstract**

One of the most significant current discussions in learning and teaching communicative methods, especially in informal and communicative language, is the teaching and learning of American slang. There is not any study about the relationship between Kolb's Learning Model and Learning American slang among Iranian EFL students. In this study sixty three EFL students were selected. The 63 participants took the *Kolb's (2006) Learning Style Inventory questionnaire*, and then the *Slang Test*. The test and the questionnaire answered by the participants were scored. Then the data were analyzed using the descriptive statistics, correlation, regression and t-test. The outcomes of the study indicated that the Abstract Conceptualization (AC)/ being theorist, followed by the Active Experimentation (AE)/ being active, are the most dominant teaching and learning styles among the students. The outcomes of the correlation illustrated a significant and high positive correlation between the Kolb's (2005) teaching and learning model and teaching and learning slang. The study demonstrated the highest correlation between the experiential teaching and learning style (Concrete Experience (CE)/ being pragmatic) and the teaching and learning slang. The findings of this study may be useful for all persons who are concerned with language teaching and learning.

### **Keywords**

Abstract Conceptualization (AC)/ being theorist, Active Experimentation (AE)/ being active, Concrete Experience (CE)/ being pragmatic, Learning styles, Slang learning.

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## **Introduction**

Learning any language involving English causes many problems for learners as well as teachers. Communicative competence demands that language involves several dimensions, i.e. grammatical, discourse, and pragmatic methods. In fact, language learning at any level and any skill depends on an interaction among these four components or competences.

Online Merriam-Webster dictionary (2017) defines slang as words that are not considered part of the standard vocabulary of a language and that are used very informally in speech especially by a particular group of people. McGavigan (2009) declares that learning at least 3000 words are necessary for learning slangatic language. American slang may play a crucial role in learning and teaching informal and communicative language since producing natural language demands utilizing due American slang, informal and colligative American expressions (McCarthy et al., 2010).

Kolb (1984), according to David and Levin's previous efforts, offers a complete theory that is the basis for an approach to education and learning as a perpetual process that lies in the intellectual principles of social and cognitive psychology and philosophy (Zuber-Skerritt 1992a, 98). Kolb's (2006) model considers four different stages of learning which are convertible to the next stage. In fact, in any stage a particular dimension will be clarified, for instance, in the concrete experience stage the whatness of the experience, in the reflective observation the meaning, in the abstract conceptualization and in the active experimentation the howness. It is worth mentioning that any learning starts with the concrete experience in order to result into the active experimentation which in its turn leads to another concrete experience. Meanwhile, a successful learning experience demands going through the four stages; however, there are preferences among individuals in following any two types learning styles—concrete experience vs. abstract conceptualization or reflective observation vs. active experimentation (Kolb, 2006). One can use the Kolb method as a description of the learning process (Henry, 1989), but he strongly emphasizes its reflection and experience-based

learning. The importance of reflection by Boreham (1987, 89), also takes into account the importance of reflection, and points out that the expression Learning from experience means learning from reflection of experience. Boud (1985) has a slogan in his book title: "*Reflection: turning experience into learning.*" Students may continue to make mistakes without reflection in the experience. The Kolb Multistage Model Principle is a simple explanation of the learning process that explains how the experience is used through reflection in the active experiment and the selection of new experiences. According to Coulb, these are several steps: concrete experience (CE), reflective observation (RO), abstract conceptualization (AC) and active experimentation (AE) (McKenna et al., 2017).

The process steps should be arranged to provide feedback, which is the basis for the new activity and the evaluation of its results. The learners should be in this cycle several times, so it might be better to think about that spiral cycle. The college considers the research process to be a helix of practice and research, which includes four main points: "*program, action, observation and reflection*" (Zuber-Skerritt, 1992b, 11). Race (1993) examines the steps, demands, performances, feedback, and digestion that a researcher uses in learning groups of students and geography staff (Healey, 1998).

### **Research Question**

Is there any relationship between Kolb's Learning Model and Learning American slang for teaching and learning by Iranian EFL students?

### **Review of Literature**

#### **American slang: Theoretical Definitions**

Macmillan English dictionary views American slang as an informal nonstandard vocabulary composed typically of coinages, arbitrarily changed words, and extravagant, forced, or facetious figures of speech. These words that are not considered part of the standard vocabulary of a language and that are used very informally in speech ... (Rundell & Fox, 2007). Meanwhile, American slang learning

demands a pre-requisite 3000 vocabulary size (McGavigan, 2009) which indicates to the complicated nature of American slang learning.

Hence, an American slang is a multi-word expression which has a fixed order with a non-literary meaning and that has to be learned in association with cultural, pragmatic and sociological use (Saberian & Fotovatnia, 2011).

Hence, American slang learning, according to Rodriguez and Winnberg (2013), demands a cultural knowledge. Nippold and Taylor (2002), in a similar vein, consider the cultural knowledge as the pre-requisite for American slang learning which gets started in childhood and is improving during the life of any speaker.

### **Learning Styles: Theoretical Definitions**

Learning styles depict approaches and directions in learning which differentiate learners in their preferences for learning. In this regard, Günes (2004) considers learning style as the approach which is followed by an individual in tackling the learning task in processing, retaining and analyzing the incoming information or language input. Hence, learning styles refer to the relatively permanent direction in utilization and response to the particular language input that the language learners are exposed to the educational contexts. (Nielsen & Kreiner, 2017).

English language teaching and strategies to promote slang knowledge and communication Most studies conducted in the field of lexis indicate that vocabulary should be included in the language training center because the language contains grammatical lexical, not lexicalized grammar. Lewis (1993) indicated that the lexical method is a change in language teaching from grammar to vocabulary training; as language does not include none grammatical or traditional vocabularies, but often fragments made of several words (Lewis, 1997). These patches include slang collocations, fixed and semi-fixed terms. These patches are "*formulaic language*".

### **Approaches and Methods to Learning Styles**

Understanding learning styles can help to use appropriate teaching methods (Vizeshfar & Torabizadeh, 2018).

Learning styles are very important factors that affect students' learning processes. Students use different styles according to their personal differences. The recognition of teaching and learning styles according to that recognition can help teachers use fruitful methods of teaching. Teachers should consider the students' personal differences and the students' educational needs (Vizeshfar & Torabizadeh, 2018).

Many students endeavor to choose effective styles in studying and suitable learning strategies. Many studies have been done to adaptation of teaching styles with learning styles (Vasileva-Stojanovska, Malinovski, Vasileva, Jovevski, & Trajkovik, 2015).

There are different approaches for dealing with learning styles, i.e. the Dunn and Dunn learning model, the Myers-Briggs type indicator (MBTI), Felder-Silverman learning model, the modularity theory, and Kolb's learning model.

Learning style depends on a person's learning preferences in perceiving, organizing, and processing information and then learning experiences (Vizeshfar & Torabizadeh, 2018). Students use different learning styles because of their personal differences. There are many different methods for people's learning. Kolb's learning style is one of the most prominent. Kolb claims that learning happens through a change in experience (Kolb & Kolb, 2005).

### **The Kolb's Learning Style Model**

Kolb's model is an empirical learning model. Learning includes a series of human activities, involving sensation, reflex, thinking and doing. According to this model, the main learning abilities are concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Learners based on their personal differences preference using one of these four styles.

Kolb's Theory of Learning Model, according to Kolb (2005), have composed of a continuum from concrete experience to active experimentation (concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation). The following explains different type of this continuum

**Concrete Experience (CE)**

Concrete Experience (CE), according to Chapman (2006, p. 14), refers to being an important part of judgments is emotional. In fact, individuals are deprived of people and are people-oriented. They do not like the theory. They learn from specific cases and examples. They learn more from discussions with peers and feedback (Chapman, 2006, p. 17).

**Reflective Observation (RO)**

Reflective observation, is related to learning with an impartial, reflective and tentative approach (Chapman, 2006, p. 17). The RO individuals rely on their own and/or others experience (Chapman, 2006, p. 17), for example, they prefer lecture format learning.

**Abstract Conceptualization (AC)**

AC individuals, on the other hand, prefer a conceptual, analytical, rational evaluation and logical thinking approach to learning (Chapman, 2006, p. 17). The AC individuals pay attention to things no people. They learn from authority-based learning cases (Chapman, 2006, p. 17).

**Active Experimentation (AE)**

Active Experimentation demonstrates that an active is learned with experimentation (Chapman, 2006, p. 17). The AE individuals learn best with engaging in homework, projects, and small group discussion (Kolb, 2005, p. 17). Hence the AE individuals don't feel convenient with lectures.

The details of Kolb's learning styles model were illustrated above. Furthermore, the significance of learning American slang was discussed, too. Considering the aforementioned viewpoints, the researcher, particularly, is attempting to explain if there is a relationship between Kolb's Learning Model and Learning American slang among Iranian EFL students. The next section the research questions as well as research hypotheses are demonstrated, and the purposes of the study and the statement of the problem are clarified.

So far, some researchers have investigated few studies about American slang and American slang expressions and since they have

not studied about the relationship between Kolb's Learning Model and Learning American slang among Iranian EFL students we tried to do this. So, the researcher wanted to recognize whether there was any relation between Kolb's Learning Model and Learning American slang among Iranian EFL students.

## **Methodology**

### **Participants**

The participants in this study were 63 EFL BA students in University of Tehran who were selected out of 70 from two classes (they were selected with simple random sampling). The participants were from the both genders—27 males and 36 females with the age between 18 and 25, with Persian native language, and with English as their foreign language. In selecting participants, random sampling procedure was utilized. In fact, two classes were selected randomly and the participants took the *Solutions Placement Test: Elementary to Intermediate* which was developed by Edwards (2007), out of them, the participants with scores one standard deviation below and above the mean score were included. Meanwhile, 43% of the participants were males and 57% females.

### **Design of the Study**

In a nutshell, the study was a correlational one in which the variables were investigated in order to determine that if these variables were correlated or not. Accordingly, the study was not going to determine whether a variable was the cause (independent variable) of other variables (dependent variables). It meant that the correlational studies investigate occurs among natural variables, while it creates a change in researcher's empirical studies in order to determine the cause of the independent variable(s) in the dependent variable(s). In this study, the correlation between learning styles and American slang learning were investigated. Hence, the difference between correlational and experimental designs should be recognized since only empirically controlled designs can well make conclusions about the cause and effect.

## Instruments

### Data Collection Procedures

The instruments for collecting data were two tests and one questionnaire: Elementary to Intermediate which was developed by Edwards (2007), Kolb's (2006) Learning Style Inventory questionnaire, and an American Slang Test (version 2006).

The Solutions Placement Test: Elementary to Intermediate which was developed by Edwards (2007) composed of two parts of grammar and vocabulary (50 items), and reading (one passage and 5 items). Kolb's (2006) Learning Style Inventory questionnaire composed of 80 items among which the students needed to choose the ones appropriate for them. The items of the Kolb's (2006) Learning Style Inventory questionnaire were to recognize different learning models of activist, reflector, theorist and pragmatist. The American Slang Test (version 2006) composed of 15 multiple-choice items. Table 1 shows the characteristics of each test or questionnaire.

**Table 1. Characteristics of the Instrumentations**

Test/Questionnaire	Number of Items	Characteristics	Scoring Procedures
Solutions Placement Test: Elementary to Intermediate	55	Multiple-choice items	Based on the key answer for each item there is only one correct choice;
Kolb's (2006) Learning Style Inventory questionnaire	80	Simple statements out of the which the subjects select	Select the desired statements; no-correct answer; four sets of questions for a four-way classification;
The American Slang Test (version 2006)	15	Multiple-choice items	Based on the key answer for each item there is only one correct choice;

The randomized participants (63 out of 70) were divided into two groups-32 and 31- (both group almost with the same features in sex, age and level of education) and this group did not receive any instruction about teaching, learning and using of American slang.

Since the Solutions Placement Test: Elementary to Intermediate (SPT) and The American Slang Test (IT) (version 2006) the standard and international tests, they enjoy from the appropriate validity—all of them cover the domain which is interested in the study, have face validity, content validity and construct validity. In terms of reliability,



Solutions Placement Test: Elementary to Intermediate (SPT) and The American Slang Test (IT) (version 2006) were administered to the EFL students in University of Tehran and the results according to the tables showed the acceptable reliability level (Hadley, 1993).

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

In analyzing the data Spearman's rank order correlation (Rho) statistic were utilized to investigate the relationship between two variables (between learning styles and American slang learning to investigate the relation among the three variables, i.e. learning styles and American slang learning. Spearman's rank order correlation (Rho) refers to a statistic which calculated the association between two variables—at least one of them is non-parametric (the data that is nominal or ordinal which does not rely on numbers, but on ranking which in this case, learning style is non-parametric). Multiple regression, on the other hand, was utilized to measure the association among several variables—at least three.

## **Results**

### **Descriptive Statistics**

The first variable investigated was the Kolb's learning styles among the participants. Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics in the dominant learning models among the participants which used the Kolb's (1995) model. It was worth mentioning that sum of each style was also computed as the table shows.

**Table 2. Kolb's Learning Styles among the Participants: Descriptive Statistics**

	<b>N</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
CE	63	6.00	16.00	10.9524	2.58674
RO	63	3.00	15.00	8.9841	2.76786
AE	63	10.00	18.00	13.6032	2.09099
AC	63	12.00	19.00	16.0000	1.89226
Styles	63	34.00	66.00	49.5397	8.58135

The participants of the study were 63 EFL students whose dominant styles and sum of the studies were presented in the table. The four styles demonstrated by the Kolb's Learning Styles are the four ones of Concrete Experience (CE), Reflective Observation (RO), Active Experimentation (AE), and Abstract Conceptualization (AC).

The participants with the Concrete Experience (CE) learning style showed the minimum of 6 and maximum of 16 with the mean about 11 and standard deviation of 2.5 among Iranian EFL students. Likewise, the Reflective Observation (RO) revealed the minimum of 3 and maximum of 15 with the mean about 9 and standard deviation of about 2 among Iranian EFL students. Moreover, the Active Experimentation (AE) illustrated the minimum of 10 and maximum of 18 with the mean about 13.5 and standard deviation of about 2 among Iranian EFL students. Finally, the Abstract Conceptualization (AC) demonstrated the minimum of 12 and maximum of 19 with the mean 16 and standard deviation of about 2 among Iranian EFL students.

In a further step, the sum of the four learning styles were computed to produce a more extensive image of performance of the participants in the study. As the table shows, the participants had the minimum of 34 and the maximum of 66 with the mean of 49.5 and the standard deviation about 9. Figure 1 shows the participants' performance in terms of their learning styles, pictorially.

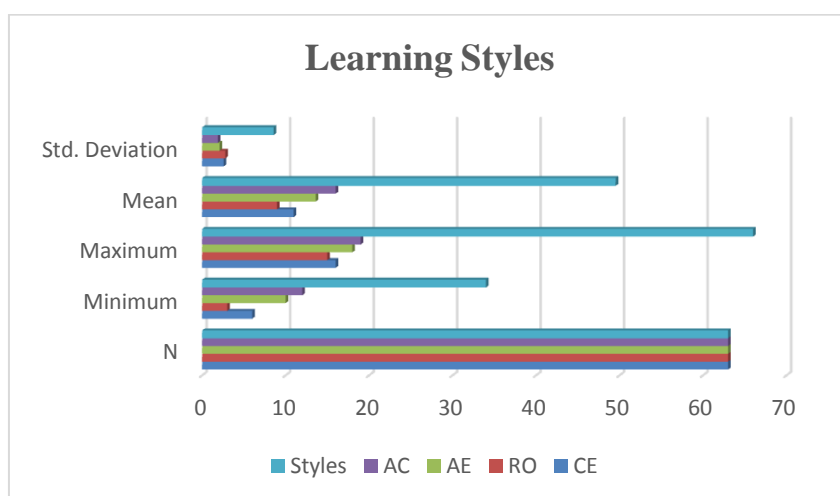


Fig. 1. Kolb's Learning Styles among the Participants

### Association between the Variables

In this section, the correlation between the variables, i.e. between different kinds of styles as well as between each learning style and slang performance of the participants were investigated.

Table 3. Coefficient Statistics: Multiple Regression

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-3.214	2.075		-1.549	.127
	gender	-.049	.454	-.007	-.107	.915
	AC	.095	.249	.055	.379	.706
	AE	.079	.308	.051	.256	.799
	RO	.091	.180	.077	.504	.616
	CE	.884	.245	.705	3.604	.001

a. Dependent Variable: slang

Considering table 3 shows a significant regression among the variables, total learning style and the four types of Kolb's learning style with the slang. The average (b=0.884) is significant (p=0.01), and the coefficient is positive for slang learning. Concrete Experience shows the greater level of slang learning or performance. About the effect of gender, each type of learning model (Active Experimentation (AE) Learning style, Reflective Observation (RO) learning style and abstract Conceptualization (AC)) and the total learning style are non-significant (p-value is much higher than the cut score) and their coefficient is negative.

**The Total Learning Style and Each Type of Kolb's Learning Style**

Table 4 demonstrates the relationship between each type of learning style with the others as well as with learning style in general. The results of the two-tailed test at the level of 0.01 illustrates a significant positive correlation between each type of Kolb Learning Style (KLS) and the total learning style.

Table 4. Associations between the Kolb's Learning Styles

		Style	CE	RO	AE	AC
Style	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.952**	.910**	.912**	.861**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	63	63	63	63	63
CE	Correlation Coefficient	.952**	1.000	.917**	.822**	.719**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000	.000
	N	63	63	63	63	63
RO	Correlation Coefficient	.910**	.917**	1.000	.735**	.631**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000	.000
	N	63	63	63	63	63
AE	Correlation Coefficient	.912**	.822**	.735**	1.000	.896**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.	.000
	N	63	63	63	63	63
AC	Correlation Coefficient	.861**	.719**	.631**	.896**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.
	N	63	63	63	63	63

Generally, all the four kinds of Kolb Learning Styles revealed to correlate significantly and strongly with the general learning styles; however, the greatest correlation was found to be by the Concrete Experience (CE).

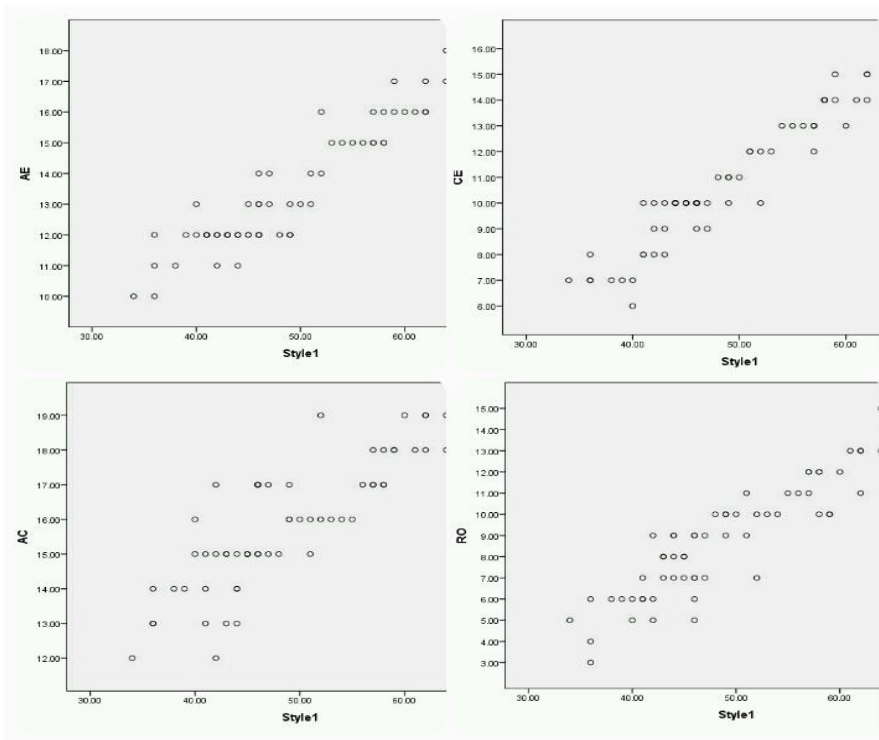


Fig. 2. Total Learning Style and the Four Types of Kolb's Learning Styles

The scatter graph of each four learning style in relation to the total learning style is presented in order to clarify the issue (Figure 2).

**Learning Style and Slang**

The total learning model and its types also were tested in relation to the slang learning among the participants. Table 5 illustrates the results of the correlation.

Table 5. Associations between Slang & the Kolb's Learning Style

		slang	Style	CE	RO	AE	AC
Spearman's rho	slang	1.000	.854**	.868**	.804**	.732**	.645**
		Correlation Coefficient					
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000	.000
		N	63	63	63	63	63

The table indicates that slang learning is positively and significantly correlated with the total learning style and also with the four types of the Kolb's learning styles considering the results of the two-tailed test which is 0.000 for all of them. The correlation between slang learning and total style is 0.854 and the correlation value between the slang learning and the four types of learning styles, i.e. Concrete Experience (CE), Reflective Observation (RO), Active Experimentation (AE), and Abstract Conceptualization (AC) are respective, 0.868, 0.804, 0.732, and 0.645. Figure 3 shows the correlation between slang and learning styles. The Concrete Experience (CE) shows the highest correlation and the Abstract Conceptualization (AC) shows the lowest correlation.

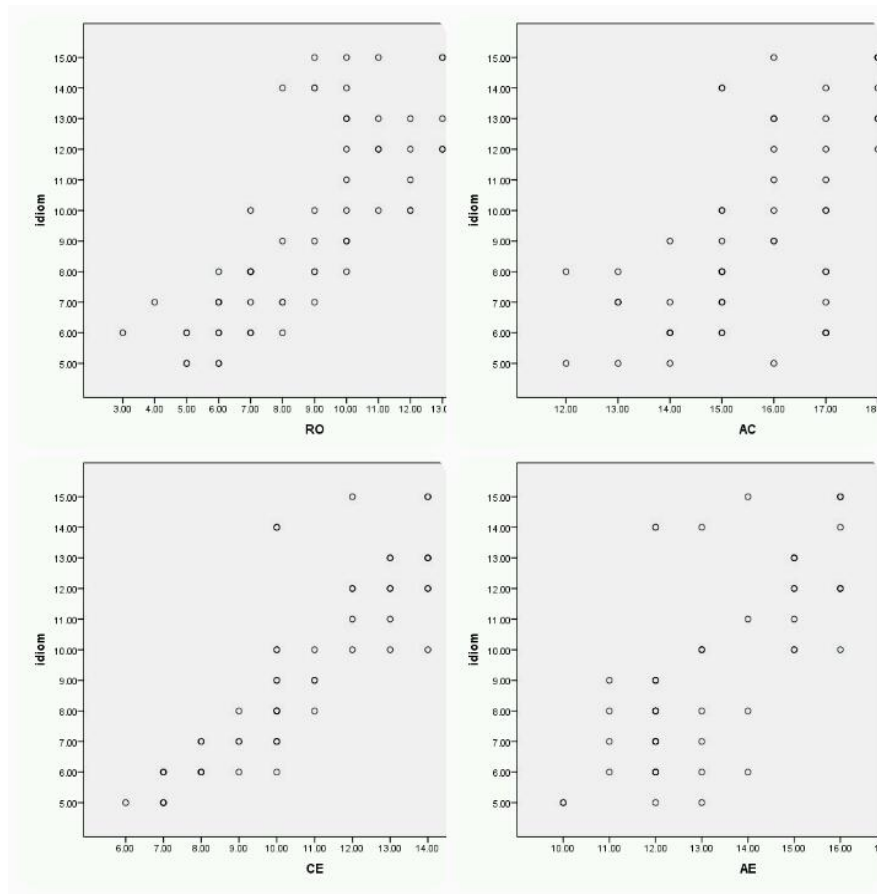


Fig. 3. Relationship between the Four Types of Kolb's Learning Styles and Slang Learning

Normality exploration test was applied which indicated to the normality distribution due to the p-value which is lower than the cut score of 0.05 and the t-test statistic was used since its pre-requisite condition is realized. Table 6 illustrates the results of the Chi-square test.

**Table 6. Chi-square Test: T-test for Equality of Means**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
slang	Equal variances assumed	.078	.782	-.499	61	.619	-.41684	.83515	-2.08682	1.25314
	Equal variances not assumed			-.493	51.693	.624	-.41684	.84485	-2.11240	1.27872
CE	Equal variances assumed	.714	.401	-.713	61	.478	-.47401	.66461	-1.80297	.85495
	Equal variances not assumed			-.700	50.129	.487	-.47401	.67752	-1.83476	.88673
RO	Equal variances assumed	1.747	.191	-.682	61	.498	-.48545	.71139	-1.90795	.93706
	Equal variances not assumed			-.704	58.962	.484	-.48545	.68998	-1.86612	.89523
AE	Equal variances assumed	.007	.933	.083	61	.934	.04470	.53944	-1.03397	1.12337
	Equal variances not assumed			.083	54.163	.934	.04470	.53890	-1.03565	1.12505
AC	Equal variances assumed	.115	.736	-.134	61	.894	-.06549	.48812	-1.04155	.91058
	Equal variances not assumed			-.135	54.599	.893	-.06549	.48651	-1.04064	.90966
Style1	Equal variances assumed	.000	.994	-.443	61	.659	-.98025	2.21040	-5.40021	3.43971
	Equal variances not assumed			-.446	55.135	.657	-.98025	2.19672	-5.38234	3.42184

The results of the study indicated that the Abstract Conceptualization (AC), followed by the Active Experimentation (AE) are the most dominant learning styles among the participants.

The results of the correlation demonstrated the positive, significant and high correlation between the Kolb's (2005) learning style and slang learning. Likewise, the study proved the highest correlation between the experiential learning style (Concrete Experience (CE) and the slang learning. meanwhile, the study showed non-significant correlation.

Moreover, the outcomes of the regression showed a significant and high positive relationship with the most contribution is played by the Concrete Experience (CE).

In a nutshell, it was found that there is a significant relationship and positive correlation between the total learning styles and slang learning, between the slang learning and all four kinds of Kolb's learning models.

## **Discussion**

Kolb's (2005) learning styles refers to a model composed of four kinds of learning models categorize individuals in terms of managing, grouping, perceiving and organizing information organizing. To this end, four different kinds of learning styles are presented as Concrete Experience (CE), Reflective Observation (RO), Abstract Conceptualization (AC), and Active Experimentation (AE).

In the study of the relationship between slang learning and Kolb's learning model, this question attempted to explain the relationship between two variables of the slang learning and Kolb's learning model among Iranian EFL students. The outcomes of the study showed not only a significant and positive correlation between the total learning style and slang learning, but also a significant and positive correlation between the slang learning and all four kinds of Kolb's learning styles. It is worth mentioning that a combination of the Concrete Experience (CE) and the Abstract Conceptualization (AC) showed to be the greatest correlation with the slang learning.

Accordingly, the hypothesis which suggested a null hypothesis

where no-relation was indicated about the relationship between the two variables was rejected. In fact, the findings of the study are supporting Nasab and Hesabi (2014) who also argue about a positive correlation between two variables. The outcome of the study, instead of a particular learning style which some studies consider the Concrete Experience (CE) (Mohammadzadeh, 2012), showed the balance among the four learning styles is also fundamental; however, the most contribution was attributed to the CE.

Lane (2001) is one of the writers who argues that learning styles lead into improvement in the attitudes of the participants which in its turn may result into improvement of academic achievements, creativity or productivity. The outcome of the study which demonstrated positive relationship between slang learning and Kolb's learning style are justifiable in light of Lane's arguments. Every individual uses a number of learning styles in tackling any problem—however in different extent—which lead to the conclusion that there is positive correlation between different four kinds of learning styles and slang learning. Hence, the study also indicated that it is not a predominant learning style that may result into the increase and improvement of the slang learning but the balance among the four Kolb's learning models and the total learning style is crucial and fundamental. Personality characteristics especially the balance among the learning styles influence and improve language learning including slang learning as it is discussed also by Wong (2011).

The outcomes of the regression showed a significant and high positive relationship with the most contribution is played by the Concrete Experience (CE).

## **Conclusion**

### **Conclusion**

Learning style and especially the balance among different learning styles are crucial at least for the situational context of learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The importance and balance between the two learning styles of the Concrete Experience (CE) and Abstract Conceptualization (AC) as the learning styles which play the most



contribution in slang learning. The results of the study illustrated a high, significant and positive regression total learning style, the four types of Kolb's learning style, i.e. Concrete Experience (CE), Reflective Observation (RO), Abstract Conceptualization (AC), and Active Experimentation (AE) and gender with the slang learning. Accordingly, slang learning in an EFL situational context demands considering not only the lexical and cultural background but also the learning styles which the study proved to be significantly correlated. It means that processes play fundamental role.

### **Pedagogical Implications**

Kolb's learning styles are the base for learning models which can compose a new frame for teaching and learning American style in order to enhance the informal potential of ability of real social communication.

The results of the study can be beneficial to teachers, students, book writers, curriculum developers, and syllabus designers. For instance, it is useful for the students who are in the process of language learning. The teachers can use this learning model in the class to slang teaching. It is also beneficial to the book writers, curriculum developers or even syllabus designers.

### **Suggestions for Further Research**

In order to explore the other dimensions of the study, it is highly recommended that the results of the study are examined through an empirical research. Likewise, the results of the study may be strengthened by including participants with different background knowledge (age, native language, foreign language, culture, and education). The study may also be replicated in other situational context by participating people with different native language or foreign language or with diverse ethnicity background.

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