

**Exploring the Role of Learning Styles in NIS Teachers' EFL Pedagogy: A Qualitative  
Inquiry**

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Dear Assel Nurdauletova

This letter now confirms that your research project titled **Exploring Kazakhstani EFL Teachers' beliefs and values about the role of students' Learning Styles in language learning** has been approved by the Graduate School of Education Ethics Committee of Nazarbayev University.

You may proceed with contacting your preferred research site and commencing your participant recruitment strategy.

Yours sincerely,

Michelle Bedeker

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**Abstract****Exploring The Role of Learning Styles in Nis Teachers' EFL Pedagogy: A Qualitative Inquiry**

Recent educational reforms have elucidated a shift from teacher-centered to more learner-oriented teaching approaches, stressing the development of learners' communicative competence. This has led to the rise of various EFL teaching strategies responsive to individual learner needs such as their learning styles (LSs), which account for differences in how learners obtain or carry out learning information. Therefore, research has suggested that teachers should employ a range of differentiated instructional methods to appeal to multiple LSs, which potentially allow learners to effectively acquire English language skills. However, Kazakhstani teachers' pedagogical decision-making is strictly underpinned by a reform framework, which requires educators to adopt a social constructivist orientation, and reconsider their values and beliefs about their instructional strategies. In addition, globally, research studies mainly focused on learners' LSs, resulting in under-exploration of its conceptualization and application from educators' perspectives. For these reasons, this qualitative study aimed to shed light on Nazarbayev Intellectual School (NIS) EFL teachers' educational philosophies, their beliefs, and perspectives on LS-based EFL pedagogy. It purposefully explored the NIS teachers' beliefs, given the contextual uniqueness of this system, which functions as a national model known for innovative methodologies. Therefore, the sample of this study consisted of three EFL teachers. Following a multiple instrumental case study design, the data were collected by employing questionnaires, practice-based scenarios, and semi-structured interviews. The study found an underlying link between the teachers' LSs and teaching styles, visible in their beliefs about language learning and teaching, which were underpinned by social constructivist and functionalist views, respectively. These values contributed to teaching strategies such as inquiry-based learning, differentiated teaching, scaffolding and multimodality, drawing on diverse LSs. Besides,

several institutional and conceptual constraints limiting teachers' understanding of LS construct were brought to the surface during the inductive data analysis. Consequently, the study highlights the following recommendations: 1) further research should be conducted to identify the pedagogical significance of the LS approach; 2) teachers should be provided with PD support and methodological guidance to deepen their theoretical and practical knowledge.

### Аңдатпа

## **НЗМ мұғалімдерінің ағылшын тілін оқытудағы оқу стильдерінің рөлін зерттеу: сапалық зерттеу**

Бүгінгі білім беру реформаларынан мұғалімдерге бағытталған тәсілден, оқушылардың коммуникативті құзыреттілігін дамытуды көздейтін, оқушыларға бағытталған тәсілдерге көшу байқалады. Бұл ағылшын тілін оқытуда оқушылардың жеке қажеттіліктерін, атап айтқанда оқу стильдерін (ОС) ескеретін педагогикалық стратегиялардың дамуына әкелді. ОС - бұл оқушылардың ақпаратты қабылдаудағы қалауларындағы немесе оқу іс-әрекеттерін жүзеге асыруындағы айырмашылықтары болып түсіндіріледі. Бірқатар зерттеулер көрсеткендей, мұғалімдер оқушыларға ағылшын тілін тиімді меңгеруге мүмкіндік беретін бірнеше ОС-не жүгіну үшін бірқатар сараланған оқыту әдістерін қолдануы керек. Алайда, қазақстандық мұғалімдердің педагогикалық шешімдері педагогтерден әлеуметтік-конструктивистік бағдарды қабылдауды және өздерінің оқыту стратегияларына қатысты өз құндылықтары мен сенімдерін қайта қарауды талап ететін реформалар шеңберімен қатаң түрде нығайтылған. Сонымен қатар, ғаламдық ғылыми зерттеулер негізінен оқушылардың ОС қарастырғандықтан, оның тұжырымдамасы мен қолданысы жөнінде оқытушылар тұрғысынан жүргізілген зерттеулер жеткіліксіз болып табылады. Осы себептерге байланысты, бұл сапалық зерттеу Назарбаев Зияткерлік Мектебі (НЗМ) оқытушыларының білім беру философиясына, олардың ОС негізінде ағылшын тілін оқыту педагогикасына деген сенімдері мен көзқарастарына анықтауға бағытталған. Өзінің инновациялық әдістемелерімен танымал ұлттық модель ретінде жұмыс істейтін НЗМ жүйесінің бірегейлігін ескере отырып, НЗМ мұғалімдерінің сенімдері мақсатты түрде зерттелді. Осылайша, бұл зерттеу жұмысы үш ағылшын тілі мұғалімдерінің қатысумен өткізілді. Кейс-стади зерттеу дизайны негізінде, деректер сауалнамалар,

тәжірибеге-бағытталған сценарийлер және жартылай құрылымдалған сұхбаттар арқылы жиналды. Зерттеу нәтижесінде мұғалімдердің ОҚ-і мен оқыту стильдері арасындағы терең байланысы анықталды. Өз кезегінде, бұл олардың әлеуметтік-конструктивтік және функционалистік көзқарастарға негізделген тіл үйрену және оқыту туралы түсініктерінен көрінеді. Аталған құндылықтар мұғалімдердің “inquiry-based learning,” сараланған оқытуға, скаффолдингке және мультимодальді оқуға негізделген оқыту стратегияларын қолдануға ықпал етті. Сонымен қатар, индуктивті деректерді талдау барысында, мұғалімдердің ОС-дері жайлы түсінітерін шектейтін бірнеше институционалдық және тұжырымдамалық шектеулер анықталды. Тиісінше, зерттеу келесі ұсыныстарды бірінші орынға қояды: 1) ОС тәсілінің педагогикалық маңыздылығын анықтау үшін қосымша зерттеулер жүргізу керек; 2) мұғалімдерге олардың теориялық және практикалық білімдерін тереңдету үшін PD қолдауын және әдістемелік нұсқаулықтары ұсыну қажет.

### **Аннотация**

## **Изучение роли стилей обучения в педагогике учителей НИШ: качественное исследование**

Недавние реформы в области образования выявили переход от подходов, ориентированных на учителя, к подходам, ориентированным на учащихся, с акцентом на развитие коммуникативной компетентности учащихся. Это привело к появлению различных стратегий преподавания английского языка, учитывающих индивидуальные потребности учащихся, такие как их стили обучения (СО), которые объясняют различия в том, как учащиеся предпочитают или осуществляют обучение. В связи с этим, исследования показали, что учителям следует использовать ряд дифференцированных методов обучения, чтобы учитывать различные стили обучения, которые позволяют учащимся эффективно овладевать навыками английского языка. Однако, принятие педагогических решений казахстанскими учителями строго подкрепляется рамками реформ, которые требуют от педагогов принять социально-конструктивистскую ориентацию и пересмотреть свои ценности и убеждения в отношении своих стратегий обучения. Кроме того, во всем мире научные исследования в основном были сфокусированы на стилях обучения учащихся, что привело к недостаточному изучению их концептуализации и применения с точки зрения преподавателей. По этим причинам данное качественное исследование было направлено на то, чтобы пролить свет на образовательную философию преподавателей Назарбаев интеллектуальной школы (НИШ), их убеждения и взгляды на преподавание английского языка, основанную на СО. В нем целенаправленно изучались убеждения учителей НИШ, учитывая контекстуальную уникальность этой системы, которая функционирует как национальная модель, известная своими инновационными методологиями. Таким образом, выборка этого исследования состояла из трех

преподавателей НИИШ. После проведения множественного инструментального тематического исследования данные были собраны с использованием анкет, сценариев, основанных на практике, и полуструктурированных интервью. Исследование выявило глубинную связь между СО учителей и стилями преподавания, проявляющуюся в их представлениях об изучении языка и преподавательской деятельности, которые основывались на социально-конструктивистских и функционалистских взглядах соответственно. Эти ценности способствовали использованию таких стратегий обучения, как inquiry-based learning (IBL), дифференцированном обучении, скаффолдинге, и мультимодальности. Кроме того, в ходе индуктивного анализа данных были выявлены несколько институциональных и концептуальных препятствий, ограничивающих понимание учителями конструкции СО. Следовательно, в исследовании выдвигаются на первый план следующие рекомендации: 1) следует провести дальнейшие исследования, чтобы определить педагогическую значимость подхода СО; 2) учителям следует предоставить поддержку PD и методическое руководство для углубления их теоретических и практических знаний.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction to the Field of Learning Styles**

Multilingual and multicultural classrooms are becoming increasingly common in many parts of the world as globalization and migration lead to greater linguistic diversity in schools. Students' linguistic repertoires are of significant interest in research arguing that multilingual classrooms need to exhibit inclusive conditions conducive to language learning while celebrating students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds, which shape the ways they acquire and maintain languages. However, what is often underexplored is students' different learning styles (LSs) in such classrooms, which can also impact their language learning and teaching. This has brought about a growing interest in the role of LSs in multilingual and multicultural classrooms and how teachers can effectively draw on students' diverse learning styles (Biggs, 2001; Fatt, 2000; Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011). According to Dunn and Dunn (1978), LSs are how learners focus, comprehend, assimilate, and retain new and challenging academic material. LSs are usually classified into four categories: visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile, each representing a different way of processing information and learning academic content (Fleming & Mills, 1992).

Research has shown that catering to diverse LSs in multilingual classrooms can enhance language learning outcomes (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1992; Griffiths & Soruç, 2021; Yin et al., 2020). For example, visual aids such as pictures and videos can be effective for visual learners, while providing opportunities for students to listen to and participate in oral discussions can benefit auditory learners. Similarly, kinesthetic and tactile learners may benefit from hands-on activities and role-playing exercises (Gardner, 1993; Menezes & Hager, 2005). However, it is important to note that some scholars have criticized the notion of LSs arguing that it oversimplifies the complex nature of learning and does not accurately capture the diversity of learners' needs (Pashler et al., 2009). Moreover, a number of studies have suggested that the effectiveness of catering to LSs may depend on other factors, such as

the complexity of the task, the learners' prior knowledge and teachers' pedagogical strategies (Kozhevnikov et al., 2005).

Despite these criticisms, many educators continue to use LSs as a framework for developing teaching strategies that are tailored to diverse learners in multilingual classrooms (Cuevas, 2016; Katz, 2012; Menezes & Hager, 2005). For example, teachers can use various teaching methods and materials, such as visuals, audio recordings, and hands-on activities, to cater to different LSs and promote language learning. Also, there are increased calls for differentiated instruction that recognize the diversity of learners and address their unique needs and interests, and it suggests that teachers need an awareness of their learners' language LSs (Harmer, 2015; Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006). For this reason, differentiated instruction in language teaching requires reconsidering students' LSs and the need to incorporate various teaching methods and materials to address diverse language LSs of students in multilingual classrooms (Harmer, 2015).

Recent research has shown that cultural factors, such as students' identities, language proficiency and familiarity with teaching methods, can influence students' dominant language LSs in multilingual classrooms. One study by Carreira and Kagan (2011) explored the relationship between LSs and language learning strategies in multilingual classrooms. The authors found that learners who preferred visual and kinesthetic LSs tended to use more visual and motor strategies in their language learning. However, learners who chose auditory LSs did not necessarily rely more on auditory techniques. Wang and Greenwood (2016) examined the LSs of Chinese international students in a multilingual classroom in Australia. The study found that the students' preferred LSs were influenced by their language proficiency and familiarity with the teaching methods used in the classroom. The study also found that Chinese international students were more likely to prefer a reflective LSs emphasizing self-awareness and introspection.

In conclusion, the role of learning styles in multilingual classrooms is an important area of research that has implications for language teaching and learning. The research literature points out that one effective strategy is to use various teaching methods that appeal to different LSs, such as visual aids, group work, and hands-on activities (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011; Peacock, 2001; Willing, 1988). Additionally, teachers can encourage students to reflect on their LSs and provide opportunities for them to learn in ways that are aligned with their preferred styles. While some scholars have criticized the notion of learning styles, London (2022) found that students who received differentiated instruction based on their LSs improved their language proficiency more than those who received traditional teaching. Therefore, teachers must recognize and accommodate different LSs in multilingual classrooms to ensure that all students can learn effectively (Hattie & Donoghue, 2016, as cited in Gudnason, 2017). For this reason, the current study is interested in Kazakhstani teachers' perspectives on their students' language LSs given the switch to social constructivist approaches such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and differentiated teaching approaches encapsulated in the updated curriculum (2016).

### **1.1. Background and Context**

As per the latest census, Kazakhstan is a diverse and multinational state with a population comprising mainly Kazakhs (63.0%) and Russians (23.7%) (Office of the President, 2018). Accordingly, the medium of instruction in educational institutions varies based on language preferences. Kazakh medium schools (KMS), Russian-medium schools (RMS), and a combination of both, alongside heritage languages like Uzbek, Uigur, and Tajik, in certain minority schools, are utilized. Former President Nazarbayev's speech emphasized the "trinity of languages" in educational reform based on modern language teaching approaches and introduced English as a medium of instruction (EMI) in Kazakhstan, motivated by the recognition of English as "the language of successful integration in the

global economy” (Nazarbayev, 2007). For this reason, Kazakhstan adopted a trilingual education language policy, which has since become “one of the main trends in the education system” (MoES, 2014, p. 4). This policy aims to use Kazakh, Russian, and English as the medium of instruction at all levels of education, with the ultimate goal of developing plurilingual individuals proficient in these three languages to boost the country's human capital and facilitate sustainable economic growth (MoES, 2015).

In adopting a trilingual policy, English gained capital as “the language of successful integration into the global community” (Nazarbayev, 2007). Consequently, numerous language teaching reforms have been encapsulated in the updated curriculum, emphasizing constructivist and social constructivist teaching principles stipulating that EFL teachers should adjust their teaching to fit the needs of their students and become the facilitators of learning (NAE, 2017; NIS, 2020). As a means of accomplishing the implementation of the trilingual educational policy and the updated curriculum, the network of Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools (NIS) for gifted learners was established nationwide (Karabassova, 2021). The establishment of the NIS school system is considered central to translating their best practices and experiences to other mainstream state schools (Shamshidinova et al., 2014; Turner et al., 2014; Yakavets & Dzhadrina, 2014). To support the smooth implementation of the newly introduced English language methods such as Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), the Center of Excellence (CoE) and “Orleu” have offered a series of in-service training programs for English teachers, taking into account the guidelines developed by Cambridge experts (MoES, 2016).

However, language educational reform was a radical paradigm shift from traditional Soviet-style language teaching to state-mandated socio-constructivist language approaches, often resulting in a disconnection between teachers’ pedagogy and the need for innovative activities that promotes students’ communicative competence (Smakova & Paulsrud, 2020;

Zhalalova & Battalova, 2021; Zhetpisbayeva et al., 2017). Notably, previous EFL teaching in the old Soviet teaching paradigm was heavily focused on teacher-centered instruction, with little room for accommodating learner autonomy and meeting students' varying academic and cognitive needs (Bekenova & Nygatayeva, 2017). Therefore, teachers' language teaching beliefs might be underpinned by behaviorist ideologies of language learning and teaching where developing students' communicative competence and learner-centeredness might be far removed from teachers' values, beliefs, and orientations about language teaching (Schiro, 2013). For this reason, this research study is interested in EFL teachers' pedagogical beliefs, their educational philosophies, and perspectives about students' diverse LSs (Peacock, 2001; Rinesko, 2018; Skogsberg & Clump, 2003).

Given learners' Kazakh and Russian linguistic hybrid backgrounds, it is even more critical for teachers' awareness of their learners' individual differences (IDs) when designing language instructional methods and materials because it can promote inclusivity of the learners' different modes of thinking, and learning preferences or styles (Kamińska, 2014; Moll, 1992; Worthley, 1999). It is important to examine the NIS school context because it is an essential component of the larger educational reform initiative in Kazakhstan, the platform that leads the implementation of innovative educational experiences and actively works to spread their practices to mainstream schools (CoE, 2012). As such, the NIS system is seen as a model for other schools in the country, being recognized internationally for its innovative approach to education, and disseminating its practices to Kazakhstani state schools. As a result, a study focusing on how/if NIS teachers draw on their learners' LS may shed light on their EFL pedagogy, and their implementation of differentiated teaching approaches that can reveal the nature of their model and best practices translated to state schools.

## 1.2. Statement of the Problem

Globally, educational reform is entangled within cultural and historical layers of national and local funds of knowledge and identities (Fullan, 2001; McLaughlin & Wood, 2021). For example, the underpinning values of current educational reform in Kazakhstan might have been influenced by the orientations of the Soviet legacy (Asanova, 2006; Bridges, 2014). Nonetheless, English language reforms require new language teaching and learning values that redefined teachers' role from an Academic Rationalist role that merely focuses on transmitting knowledge, facts and skills to new social constructivist values requiring Kazakhstani teachers to become facilitators of learning to develop learners' critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity (Tanriverdi & Apak, 2014). Based on this paradigm shift, educators are encouraged to adopt learner-centered approaches such as scaffolding learning, drawing on their students' diverse abilities and promoting cooperative and active learning (CoE, 2015; Khajayeva et al., 2017). However, Kazakhstani educators operate within a strict policy reform framework that necessitates a reconsideration of their values and beliefs about teaching methods, evaluation, and how students learn, i.e., learning styles (Kanayeva, 2019).

Consistent with the requirements of the updated curriculum and the changed teaching paradigm, the NIS schools have adopted the differentiated instruction approach wherein the teachers are expected to be responsive to learners' varying LSs, interests, preferences, struggles and strengths. However, much of the previous research focuses on teachers' and students' challenges associated with developing English communicative proficiency (Ismail et al., 2017; Tuspekova et al., 2019), students' language learning experiences and strategies (Batyrganova, 2020; Suleimenova, 2013). For this reason, this study places a closer emphasis on NIS EFL teachers' perspectives on LSs and their LS-tailored teaching strategies to understand the multifaceted nature of the relationship between their pedagogy and LSs in developing students' English language competencies (Hamid & Nguyen, 2016).

### **1.3. Purpose of the Study**

CLT pedagogy and differentiated instruction have been widely used in schools for gifted children (Aliyeva, 2018; Bekeyeva, 2019). Yet, little is known about teachers' beliefs and values about students' LSs and the role they can play in developing students' foreign language competence and communicative abilities. Therefore, the present study explores EFL teachers' perspectives on drawing on their students' LSs, and the role of LSs in their EFL pedagogical decision-making. For this reason, I pose the following research questions:

**RQ1:** What are EFL teachers' values and beliefs about drawing on their students' LSs in developing English language competencies?

#### **Sub Questions:**

1. How do EFL teachers' LSs relate to their TSs?
2. What language learning and teaching beliefs underpin EFL teachers' TSs in developing students' English language competencies?

### **1.4. Significance of the Study**

EFL studies in Kazakhstan focus more on the challenges teachers and learners face and less on Kazakhstani teachers' responsive pedagogies to bring about change in a rapidly transforming educational context (Smakova & Paulsrud, 2020; Zhalalova, 2021). Therefore, this research study is significant for several reasons. Firstly, it addresses a gap in the literature by focusing on the construct of Learning Styles in EFL teachers' responsive language teaching strategies. Secondly, the study can provide insight into the beliefs and values of teachers regarding their teaching strategies associated with differentiated teaching and student diversity in modern EFL pedagogy in Kazakhstan. Along with this, the study's findings may contribute to NIS teachers-practitioners' further inquiry (lesson study/action research) into the impact of LSs on learners' communicative competence and translate experiences to

mainstream schools. Such endeavors may push them to reconsider their teaching practices and structure their syllabi and course plans to accommodate their students' LSs. Finally, this study can be valuable for pre-service and in-service teacher trainers, policymakers, and teachers as it can shed light on the beliefs of language teachers and how they implement differentiated teaching. As a result, the study holds theoretical, pedagogical, and practical significance relevant for EFL teachers, practitioners, and school administrators regarding students' individual differences (IDs) and learning styles (LS).

### **1.5. Definitions of Key Terms**

This thesis includes several key terms explained below.

*Individual differences* are the personal characteristics of a learner consisting of their age, sex, affection, personality, cognitive styles, learning abilities, learning strategies, and learning styles (Dörnyei, 2006).

*Learning style* is an umbrella term referring to individuals' preferred way or approach to learning (Senior, 2016).

*Teaching style* is teachers' teaching strategies and methods employed to manage classrooms and deliver content (Oi & Stimpson, 1994).

*Differentiated instruction* is a mode of teaching instruction tailored to meet individual students' needs and learning styles (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006).

*Scaffolding* is "teachers' contextual support for meaning through simplified language, teacher modeling, visuals and graphics, cooperative learning, and hands-on learning" (Ovando et al., 2003).

*Multimodal teaching* is the use of multiple modes such as visual, auditory, reading, writing, and kinesthetic methods to deliver content (Hull, 2005).

*English language competencies* are linguistic, communicative, symbolic, transactional, and interactional competencies that learners holistically need to attain to become proficient users of English (Tavakoli & Jones, 2018).

### **1.6. Thesis Outline**

This dissertation includes six chapters. Chapter 1 introduced the background to the field of LS, the Kazakhstani educational context, the study's purpose, and its significance. Chapter 2 will be devoted to the literature review of theories relevant to Learning Styles, and Language Learning and Teaching. Chapter 3 then focuses on the research methodology and ethical considerations. In Chapter 4, I present the findings, followed by Chapter 5, which discusses the findings in relation to the existing literature. This thesis concludes with Chapter 6, which summarizes the findings, presents the implications and the study's limitations, and makes recommendations for further research.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

This study aims to explore Nazarbayev Intellectual School (NIS) EFL teachers' beliefs and values of learning styles (LSs) and their responsive pedagogies aimed at developing students' EFL competencies. The previous chapter provided a background to the study and the thesis topic, research purpose and the significance of the study. The following chapter will be devoted to the Literature review. The reviewed literature is clustered around the following main sections: (a) History of Learning and Teaching Styles; (b) the application of Learning Styles in EFL classrooms; and (c) Language Learning and Teaching theories.

### **Introduction**

Historically, traditional language teaching methods have emphasized teacher-centeredness for content planning and assessing the learners' knowledge (Schreurs & Dumbraveanu, 2014). In this approach, learning is heavily based on teachers' input and evaluating how students regurgitate and reproduce content knowledge. However, the expansion of English due to the current international trends has brought about a change in EFL pedagogies which now advocates for more learner-centered learning, in which learners are the active constructors of knowledge aligned with constructivist teaching principles (Koohang et al., 2009; Schreurs & Dumbraveanu, 2014). Furthermore, globalization, transnational flows and immigration have resulted in diverse classrooms with calls for more inclusive language teaching strategies (Furr & Garcia, 2018). Therefore, as individuals have diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds and distinct language learning preferences in multilingual classroom environments teachers' responsive pedagogies should create conditions that validate learners' full linguistic repertoires, their funds of knowledge, and lived experiences (Moll, 1992; Worthley, 1999). In this way, traditional language teaching would not be inclusive of students' cultural beliefs and values, individual differences, and learning styles (LSs).

In language development, learners' individual differences (ID), such as their "learning traits, which encompasses their motivation, aptitude, and learning styles" (Kamińska, 2014, p.3), play a critical role in language learning (Dörnyei, 2006). Although some of the variables of IDs, such as ability and aptitude to acquire L2, have garnered attention, there is relatively little inquiry on the construct of LSs and its salience in second language education, which is the focus that this research study seeks to address. Dörnyei (2006) aptly points out that LSs should interest those involved in the educational field because, unlike other dimensions of IDs in SLA, such as aptitudes and abilities, LS does not imply an innate attribute that directly leads to learning success. In other words, the discourse about LSs calls for a shift from binary views about students' abilities, such as gifted or ungifted students. On the contrary, LS reflects personal preferences, which can be situated on a continuum where one child might be a global thinker, while another may prefer specific thinking patterns and exhibit success through such learning styles (Felder & Brent, 2005). This means that the LS continuum does not judge or compare; rather represents a "value-neutral approach for understanding individual differences among linguistically and culturally diverse students" (Kinsella, 1995, p. 171).

In education, LSs research foregrounds the students' unique learning approaches, how they perceive the environment, interact with it, and experience learning (Cuevas, 2015; Kinsella, 1995; Massa & Mayer, 2006; Omrod, 2008). It is argued that an awareness of individual learning styles can inform teachers' assessment, lesson planning, resources, and tasks to increase their students' motivation and language development (Fine, 2003). However, it is important to note that "learning styles are neither better nor worse than each other" (Kazu, 2009, p. 85) and that responsive pedagogies that draw on diverse LS, can turn learners' differences into an advantage and can result in the development of learners' LS

repertoire. For this reason, the following sections will foreground the history of LS and teachers' teaching styles (TS) in multilingual classrooms.

### **2.1. The History of the Constructs of Learning and Teaching Styles**

As mentioned in the introduction section of Chapter one, LS refers to the different ways individuals process and retain information. LSs advocates argue that understanding one's LS can facilitate learning and improve the acquisition of language skills such as speaking, reading, and writing (Fleming & Baume, 2006; Willingham et al., 2015). The LS concept has existed for centuries, with the earliest reference dating back to Aristotle who believed that individuals had different ways of learning and processing information (Haswell, 2017). It started getting attention in the field of education in the 20<sup>th</sup> century when psychologists began scrutinizing the psychological factors affecting learners' success in academic and non-academic settings and since then has been the focus of research (Kaminska, 2013). LSs scholars conceptualize learning styles as either innate or environmentally developed. For instance, Ehrman and Oxford (1992) define LS as "patterns of mental functioning and dealing with new information" (p.311). Similarly, Reid (1998) views it as "internally situated characteristics, which are often not consciously perceived as contributing to the intake and comprehension of new information. An innate LS frame is underpinned by the belief that it is fixed and that teaching methods do not develop or change students' LSs (Kamińska, 2014).

Yet another cohort of scholars asserts that learning styles are not fully imposed at birth but are fluid and shaped by social and cultural environments (Sternberg, 1994). In this way, the classroom environment, tasks, and situations can influence and develop students' LS in areas not considered strengths. Felder (1995) classifies such LS traits into the following three categories: 1) inherent ways of receiving and processing knowledge; 2) surface, deep, and strategic approaches to information acquisition; 3) overall perceptions of knowledge

acquisition and its assessment. Aligned with this view, critiques of LS illustrate that students may have varying motivations and attitudes about language learning and have different learning strategies to cope with teachers' instructional practices. However, some researchers argue that little evidence supports that teaching a student's learning style improves educational outcomes (Cuevas, 2015; Rogowsky et al., 2015; Scott, 2010).

Nonetheless, the LS field has developed various TS instruments highlighting that various teaching methods can develop different learning styles for different language learning situations (Akobirova & Sayfiyeva, 2022; Katz, 2012; Rogowsky et al., 2015). Nessipbayeva and Egger (2015) argue that when educators are conscious of LSs, their TSs, and methods, they can obtain a better understanding of how to govern classroom learning, apply relevant language learning instruction and connect with their learners. In this regard, there exists a great corpus of research on various TS models and taxonomies that provide classification of different styles of teaching. Grasha (1994) developed one of the most widely used TS Models that identifies teacher-centered and student-centered learning styles and teaching styles. This TS model offers a continuum between formal authoritative teaching styles as belonging to a teacher-centered approach, while the facilitator and the delegator teaching styles draw on a learner-centered approach. As a result, such TS models would be useful in the Kazakhstani contexts to reveal EFL teachers' responsive pedagogies with regard to educational reform.

A comparative study related to Kazakhstani and Austrian teachers' TSs revealed that teachers' dominant TS across the countries represents a traditional teacher-centered approach (Nessipbayeva & Egger, 2015). Moreover, existing research reports that teachers with higher academic degrees prefer expert and formal authority styles associated with a teacher-centered mode of instruction, in which they feel comfortable maintaining and controlling the pace of learning, which is particularly accurate in the case of most Asian cultures of teaching (Oi & Stimpson, 1994; Wong, 2004). Additionally, research shows that teachers' classroom

decision-making and pedagogy are highly driven by their students' expectations about the teacher's role and how learning should be conducted (Wong, 2004). For example, Chinese ESL/EFL teachers may find it necessary to resort to teacher-centered strategies since they believe that students depend on teachers' error correction and provide them with explicit instruction to fulfill tasks (Flowerdew, Miller, & Li, 2000; Peacock, 2001).

As far as the conceptualization of LSs is concerned, in the United States (US), Hawk and Shah (2007) found that the most known LS instruments are the Fleming's Visual, Auditory, Reading/ Writing and Kinesthetic (VARK), Kolb's Learning Style inventory, and the Dunn and Dunn Productivity Environmental Preference Survey. As for Kazakhstan, the framework of LSs that is mostly utilized in the Kazakhstani context is Fleming's (1987) VARK model. To date, several studies have employed this model as a framework for LS surveys to identify Kazakh students' LSs (Klimova & Poulouva, 2016). Another widely recognized LS classification is Reid's (1987) Perceptual Learning Styles Model because it consists of different *modality strengths* such as Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic, Tactile, Group, and Individual. It also includes multiple variables such as educational, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds that can contribute to students' learning style preferences. As a result, Reid's model (1987) is applicable in multilingual contexts because of its relevance to teaching and learning, the inclusivity of cultural and linguistic variables and the teaching techniques it proposes to include learners' different learning styles in EFL classrooms.

## **2.2. The Application of Learning Styles in EFL Classrooms**

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in understanding how teachers consider students' LSs in their teaching practices. Education experts have highlighted that it is most effective when instructors accommodate multiple learning styles by presenting different media and differentiate learning process by grouping students according to their LSs (Kyprianidou, 2012; Pasina et al., 2019; Wilson, 2011). However, some research studies

illustrate that teachers never explicitly refer to their learners' LSs when they plan their teaching strategies (Rinesko, 2018; Wilson, 2011). For instance, Phipps and Borg (2009) reported that EFL teachers in a Turkish context believed that their teaching practices and approaches were not always effective due to "student expectations, preferences, and classroom management concerns" (p. 387). Moreover, Flowerdew et al. (2000) found that Chinese teachers in Hong Kong preferred "chalk and talk" teaching styles, which meant that they did not consider their students' LS and encouraged passive language learning.

On the other hand, Ng, and Farrell's (2003) study showed that some Singaporean teachers were aware of their learners' diversity and designed material appropriate for their learners' needs. Similarly, Agustrianita and Purnawarman (2019) found that Indonesian teachers were aware of their students' LS preferences and prepared corresponding teaching strategies to assist their acquisition of knowledge and new information. Moreover, research suggests that most students prefer lessons aided with visual materials when teachers integrate information and communication technology (ICT), playing videos, using flip charts, PowerPoint presentations, and whiteboards (Katz, 2012; Rogowsky et al., 2015). Additionally, Rinesko (2018) suggests that there is a need for further research investigating English language teachers' awareness of LSs, their attitudes towards innovative practices, and their plans for effective classroom learning. Therefore, to encourage effective EFL pedagogies for the 21<sup>st</sup> century literacies, teacher training programs should explore the affordances of multimodality in the application of LS (Wilson, 2011).

However, language is a social construct, and students develop certain learning traits that are underpinned by their cultural values, beliefs, and perceptions (Irvine & York, 1995). For example, some cultures may place a greater emphasis on oral communication and storytelling as a means of transmitting knowledge, while others may focus more on written communication and logical reasoning (Kim & Jung, 2012). Additionally, cultural differences

in communication styles, such as direct versus indirect communication, can also affect LSs. It is important for educators to be aware of these cultural differences and to strive for cultural awareness in their teaching practices. Cultural awareness includes recognizing that group values and practices can impact students' LSs, respecting different LSs, adapting teaching methods accordingly, and being sensitive to cultural differences in communication and other aspects of learning (Worthley, 1999). By doing so, educators can create a more inclusive and effective learning environment for all students, regardless of their cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Guild & Garger, 1998 as cited in Uhlik & Jones, 2008).

### *Cultural Influences on LS*

Educational reform as political borrowing from the West is not neutral, it drastically changes the rules of the game, which affects EFL teachers' existing dispositions because borrowed policies can be far removed from teachers' and learners' diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, pedagogical histories, and classroom strategies (Breeze & Legarre, 2021). For this reason, Teaching Styles (TSs) and LS empirical studies in Southeast Asian educational contexts can result in mismatches between teachers and learners' expectations (Peacock, 2001; Rao, 2010; Xiao, 2006; Zhang, 2007). One mixed-methods study examined Hong Kong college students' and their English for Academic Purposes (EAP) teachers' inclusion of students' LS in their teaching strategies (Peacock, 2001). The study revealed a mismatch between certain LS preferences because most of the students preferred Group and Kinesthetic LSs, whereas their teachers favored Individual and Auditory styles. In addition, they preferred teacher-centered teaching strategies with which they were most familiar. Hence, the teachers expressed concerns about having to adapt their teaching to western-based cultural values that encourage learners as co-constructors in language learning. As a result, the author suggests that matching learning and teaching styles is likely to enhance students'

second language acquisition and affect their emotional well-being, confidence, and attitudes toward EFL learning.

Similar results were found in Xiao's (2006) mixed-methods cross-cultural research project about the relationship between Irish teachers' TSs and Chinese students' LSs in an English classroom. It illustrated that the 48 students who completed a survey and participated in a semi-structured interview experienced frustration due to their Irish teachers' TSs because it did not match their culture-specific LS. The students reported that they prefer a teacher-centered approach because they learn best when receiving knowledge from the teacher rather than discovering it independently. The students also reported that classroom activities were over-emphasizing communicative aspects involving them in games and group discussions, leaving little room for them to receive authentic linguistic input. Therefore, the cultural mismatch between Irish teachers' facilitator TS that encouraged active forms of student learning, caused anxiety and a lack of student involvement (Xiao, 2006).

In addition, Rao's (2010) study with 20 Chinese students taking EFL classes conducted by Native English-speaking (NES) teachers found a similar mismatch between students' LSs and teachers' TSs. In this study, the students indicated that NES teachers' global TSs conflicted with their traditional mode of acquiring knowledge. They perceived the instructors' teaching styles to mainly focus on applying holistic strategies such as guessing, reading for the gist, identifying the main idea rather than analyzing the texts for more complex language structures. Thus, they felt that such TSs did not conform to their traditional and preferred way of learning. As a result, ignoring the relationship between students' culture and their LS can adversely impact student language learning experience. Therefore, NES teachers must have a cultural awareness of their learners' preferred LS to vary between western TS and local students' LSs to increase their motivation in EFL learning (Rao, 2010).

In Saudi Arabia, Alnujaidi (2019) investigated the relationship between teaching and learning styles. This quantitative study used the self-reporting surveys Index of Learning Style (ILS) and Teaching Style (ITS). The results indicated that Saudi learners have concrete, visual (pictures, drawings, cartoons), and sensing learning style preferences. Conversely, teachers have more abstract teaching styles preferring that their students discover new information from written materials rather than illustrations. However, the study only focused on quantitative data; it did not provide an in-depth understanding of self-reports and survey results. For this reason, it requires a deeper look at the implications of purposefully designed teaching tasks on the use of LSs in EFL contexts.

### ***The Impact of Purposefully Designed TS on LS***

Carranza-Marchena (2019) undertook a case study in a Costa Rican private institution to explore the impact of specific language teaching strategies and how they draw on LSs to develop students' listening, reading, writing, and speaking skills. After an intervention that included exposure to specific language teaching strategies, the students indicated that they improved their oral communication scores, especially in terms of fluency, pronunciation, and vocabulary gain.

Also, an action research study at a Vietnamese university used learning style surveys to determine students' LSs, and how teachers collaboratively developed teaching strategies to include their students' LSs (Tuan, 2011). Even though the study found that not all teachers succeeded in implementing appropriate teaching strategies, it also revealed that those teachers who implemented innovative teaching strategies enhanced student-teacher interaction and resulted in teachers revising their TSs.

At a Malaysian university, Al-Khaza'leh's (2020) mixed-methods research revealed a good match between EFL students' learning styles and their instructors intentionally planned teaching strategies. In particular, the results showed that the TS encouraged risk-taking and

that students positively reacted to their teachers' error feedback. Therefore, the author concluded that the teachers' use of appropriately aligned TS with the students' LSs increased engagement and sensemaking spaces.

In one of the few recent research studies set in the Central Asian context, Akobirova and Sayfiyeva (2022) investigated the importance of Learning Styles in EFL and whether it facilitated the language learning of one participant. In their study, they used a series of activities to understand the student's preferred LS. Although initially, the participant appeared to be a kinesthetic learner, who likes learning by touching, a month after the study, she commented that she developed a preference for visual learning. This shows that students' LS repertoire can be expanded provided that teachers use varied methods catering to diverse learning preferences. Also, the respondent indicated that she prefers structure and explicit direction/instruction, and guidance and support in her language learning process. Thus, the study suggested that for an EFL Kazakhstani student to become fluent, it is optimal to try different activities to help a student explore and experiment with various LSs as well as ensure that learning methods are appropriate to culture-specific preferences. In addition, the role of TS in accommodating a range of LSs can potentially develop EFL students' language skills and interest in learning; Yet a great corpus of research indicates several challenges in matching TS and LS.

### ***Challenges in Accommodating Different Learning Styles***

Several studies have shown students' and teachers' perceptions regarding the situational and external challenges in implementing students' LSs (Peacock, 2001; Rao, 2010; Xiao, 2006; Rao, 2009). For example, situational and classroom-level impediments emerged from a study examining Taiwanese students' perceptions of their teachers' TSs (Chang, 2010). The results indicated a challenge between learners' and teachers' expectations. For example, the students preferred a TS that creates positive learning

environments, while their instructors had a predominantly traditional (teacher-fronted) style of teaching. As a result, such a classroom context would show no alignment between the teachers' TSs and the students' LSs, which can result in a negative learning experience. Consequently, one point ubiquitously articulated across is raising educators' and learners' awareness of their TSs and LSs, which gives an opportunity to reflect on their pedagogy and learning gains. Thus, several researchers advocate for not only adopting LSs-matching teaching methods but also helping students become aware of their LSs because it can be "an empowering experience that students need if they are to be successful lifelong learners" (Claxton & Murrell, 1987, p.4; Burke & Dunn, 2002; Dunn & Dunn, 2008;).

Karabuga (2015) explored the contextual factors contributing to teachers' challenges in accommodating their students' LSs. The study foregrounded that despite teachers using various class activities to include LSs, some students (avoidant learners) showed a lack of participation. Another problem encountered by the teachers was the curriculum restrictions. Some teachers related the issue in implementing LS-oriented teaching to the time-boundedness of the class sessions and class size. In the distance learning context, Maryono & Lengkanawati (2022) showed that even though teachers designed online classes considering their learners' LS, they faced challenges such as technical malfunctions, excessive workload, a large number of students, and a decrease in students' engagement in lessons.

The nature of challenges in LS-based instruction goes beyond classroom-level constraints. For instance, Gudnason (2017) argues that policy reform and curriculum expectations can impact teachers' willingness to focus students' individual needs and implement differentiated instruction. In mandated policy reform contexts, they can view the inclusion of LS as preparing individualized learning materials and creating an excessive workload. Nonetheless, teachers' values and beliefs about LS can influence their teaching methods and practices (Phipps & Borg, 2009). For example, a teacher who values student-

centered learning may prioritize collaborative activities and student-led discussions in their classroom. In contrast, a teacher who believes in the importance of direct instruction may focus on delivering clear, structured lessons with specific learning outcomes (Nessipbayeva & Egger, 2015). As a result, it is critical to shed light on the language learning theories that underpin teachers' pedagogical reasoning in EFL classrooms. For this reason, the next section discusses the theoretical underpinning that can impact teachers' LS perspectives in my study.

### **2.3. Theories of Language Learning and their Impact on LSs**

Language is a complex and essential aspect of human communication, and understanding how people learn language has been the subject of research and debate. Various theories have emerged over the years that attempt to explain the mechanisms behind language acquisition and learning. Considering that language acquisition draws on psychological and social aspects, it is important to understand how these theories may shape an individual's language learning styles. The most influential language learning theories that hold implications for LS are behaviorist language learning theory (Skinner, 1957), Chomsky' (1959) innatism theory, the cognitive theory of language learning (Piaget, 1957) and constructivist or social constructivist language learning theories (Vygotsky, 1978).

First, behaviorism is one of the earliest language learning theories, which argues that language is learned through imitation, repetition, and positive reinforcement. According to supporters of this theory, children learn language by imitating the speech of those around them and receiving positive feedback when they use correct grammar and vocabulary (Skinner, 1957). The work of behaviorist psychologists such as Skinner heavily influenced this theory and is often associated with the use of drill and practice methods in language teaching. However, behaviorism has been criticized for ignoring different intricate processes involved in language acquisition and dismissing the role of innate factors in language learning (Chomsky, 1959). As a result, including LSs would largely be ignored in behaviorist

language teaching because it focuses on language drills and decontextualized rules to be mastered by all learners.

A subsequent theory is the nativist theory, which posits that individuals are born with an innate capacity to learn a language (Chomsky, 1959). This theory is built on the idea that all humans share a universal grammar, underlying language that is internalized in the human brain (Pinker, 1994). As suggested by nativists, the brain has a unique device that allows children to acquire language naturally. Although nativist theory has had a considerable influence on our perception of language acquisition, it has been criticized for failing to recognize the impact of social and environmental factors in language learning (Tomasello, 2003). Nativist theories recognize individual differences in language learning abilities but do not explicitly acknowledge learning styles and would likely emphasize the innate mechanisms of language acquisition over individual learning preferences (Chomsky, 1959; Pinker, 1994). Critics of the nativist model argue for a shift from the innate ability of the brain to acquire language toward the role of cognitive and social factors in language learning (Hulstijn et al., 2014).

The cognitive theory of language learning emphasizes the role of mental processes such as memory, attention, and problem-solving in language acquisition (Hulstijn et al., 2014). According to cognitive theorists, children learn language by actively processing information and making connections between different aspects of language. Therefore, language learning is not just a matter of imitation and repetition but also involves the development of mental skills that include various cognitive processes such as paying attention, noticing patterns, making connections, practicing, and reflecting. From cognitive learning theories, Communicative Language Teaching methods (CLT), Task Based Language Teaching and Learning (TBLT), and Content and Integrated Learning (CLIL) (Shintani & Ellis, 2014; Hall, 2016) have gained increased attention with a shift from “what language is”

to “what language does”, which has been considered a significant turning point in second language education (Hall, 2016). Therefore, cognitivist theory and LS can be integrated into language learning because visual learners might benefit from watching videos or looking at images, auditory learners might gain from listening to podcasts or songs, and kinesthetic learners might enjoy role-playing and other interactive activities. Even though this theory has been influential because it draws on various learning activities that can cater to different learning styles, they are often criticized for neglecting the role of social and cultural factors in language learning which are important social and communicative aspects of language development (Tomasello, 2003).

The above critique gave rise to constructivist (Piaget, 1967) and social constructivist language learning theories (Vygotsky, 1978). Piaget (1967) emphasized an individualized view of the learner’s active construction of knowledge in understanding grammar and vocabulary through exploration and experimentation (Jones & Brader-Araje, 2002). On the other hand, Vygotsky (1978) argued for the role of social interaction and communication in language acquisition, where children learn language by observing and interacting with other speakers, and through feedback and guidance from more experienced speakers. This theory accentuates the role of social and cultural factors in language learning and has also been influential in shaping communicative language teaching methods that emphasize interaction and negotiation of meaning (Halliday, 1978). Both theories have influenced language teaching methods emphasizing learner-centered approaches and project-based learning (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Many researchers have combined these perspectives to explain language learning from a more comprehensive point of view (Gibbons, 2015; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Pavlenko, 2006). They argue that social interaction and individual cognitive processes are both key factors that impact language learning and that the learner actively constructs meaning through interacting. As a result, combining these two language learning

theories acknowledges both social and individual factors in language acquisition and has led to the development of more integrated language teaching methods that consider both perspectives (Gibbons, 2015).

To summarize, English language learning and teaching are not neutral because they are always based on particular language learning theories that reflect political, cultural, and social value dimensions (Harb, 2017; Mills & Unsworth, 2016). These theories consist of values that often determine what and how language curricula should be implemented and what constitutes good teaching and learning practice. The review of the literature revealed that the underpinning values of different language learning theories could draw on or exclude the use of LS in language pedagogical strategies. For instance, behaviorist theory has a Scholar Academic value underpinning that prioritizes the transmission of language knowledge and therefore does not encourage using students' LSs (Schiro, 2013). On the other hand, cognitive theory aims to develop language skills relevant to learners' personal goals and the needs of their communities (Piaget, 1957). The inclusion of LS can usually be achieved by using authentic materials, incorporating service-learning projects, and providing opportunities for cross-cultural communication and global citizenship. Thus, if educators' beliefs and values align with a specific theory, they are likely to use strategies and resources to help students become active and responsible members of society committed to making a positive difference in the world (Fine, 2003; Schiro, 2013).

In conclusion, any mismatches between the values in state-mandated educational reform and teachers' beliefs can impact language policy implementation (Su, 2012). If teachers do not value students as active participants in their language learning, they would probably not consider their students' LSs. Therefore, teachers' educational philosophies and beliefs are fundamental to the implementation of language teaching strategies in the

classroom. The subsequent section will more narrowly focus on the theories underlying teachers' language teaching beliefs that might inform the use of LS in their teaching methods.

#### **2.4. Theories of Language Teaching and their Impact on TS**

Numerous studies argue that language teachers' values and beliefs or their teaching philosophies shape their instructional practices (Blanton & Moorman, 1987; Borg, 2003; Peacock, 2001; Soccorsi, 2013). The literature foregrounds that teachers' language teaching beliefs are influenced by empiricist, rationalist, and functionalist perspectives that can impact their pedagogical approaches (Diller, 1978; Stern, 1983 as cited in Johnson, 1992). First, *empiricists* value behaviorist or *skill-based approaches* that emphasize memorizing and repeating language patterns, using drills to produce language by breaking down language into separate forms (Bloomfield, 1942 cited in Johnson, 1992). Secondly, according to the *rationalist* perspective, language learning is acquired innately, and is a complex construct with grammatical patterns which individuals use in meaningful ways (Chomsky, 1959). *The functionalist or communicative* orientation apparently are linked to the *constructivist and social constructivist* theories that value learners' real-life experiences and communication in authentic social contexts, focus on using authentic language within situational contexts, and emphasize meaningful communication rather than correct structural form (Halliday, 1973).

Current language teaching approaches such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT) draw on a functionalist language teaching perspective. To note, functionalist language teaching perspectives are found to be closely related to social-constructivist language learning theories. Therefore, the language teaching methods in contemporary teaching, associated with the functionalist orientation, are inquiry-based language learning and scaffolding strategies which are concerned with learners' cognitive development achieved through interaction and guidance (Duffy & Raymer, 2010; Lee, 2014).

Duffy and Anderson (1986) found that although teachers could articulate their beliefs about language teaching, various contextual factors impacted their instructional practices. In this regard, micro and macro-level factors can influence teachers' beliefs and values (Tsui, 2007 as cited in Butler, 2011). On a macro level, some teachers may enact a top-down curriculum without reflecting on their own teaching philosophy and beliefs. Research suggests that micro indicators include teachers' values and beliefs about learning as influential in shaping their TS (Borg, 2003; Mansour, 2009; Stitt-Gohdes, 2001). For example, teachers tend to adopt the TS that has best worked for them in their own learning experiences; if it was a teacher-centered instructional environment, they are likely to focus on content and use more formal and teacher-centered methods (Hayes & Allinson, 1997; Kahn & Flanagan, 2006 as cited in Nessipbayeva & Egger, 2015). In this light, Floyd (2010) emphasizes the importance of teachers' knowledge of their educational philosophy in refining their pedagogy, instructional strategies, and learning activities. On the other hand, teachers who are well familiar with student-centered learning and constructivism theories may use more student-centered instruction regardless of their learning preferences (Stitt-Gohdes et al., 1999). In this way, teachers' prior positive or negative schooling experiences as learners and their teaching training can influence their classroom practices and TSs (Bagheri & East, 2021; Ellis, 2006; Reeves, 2009). Consequently, the present study could reveal how teachers' learning experiences as learners shape their classroom practice decisions and their readiness to cater to students' needs in their TSs (Borg, 2003; Mansour, 2009).

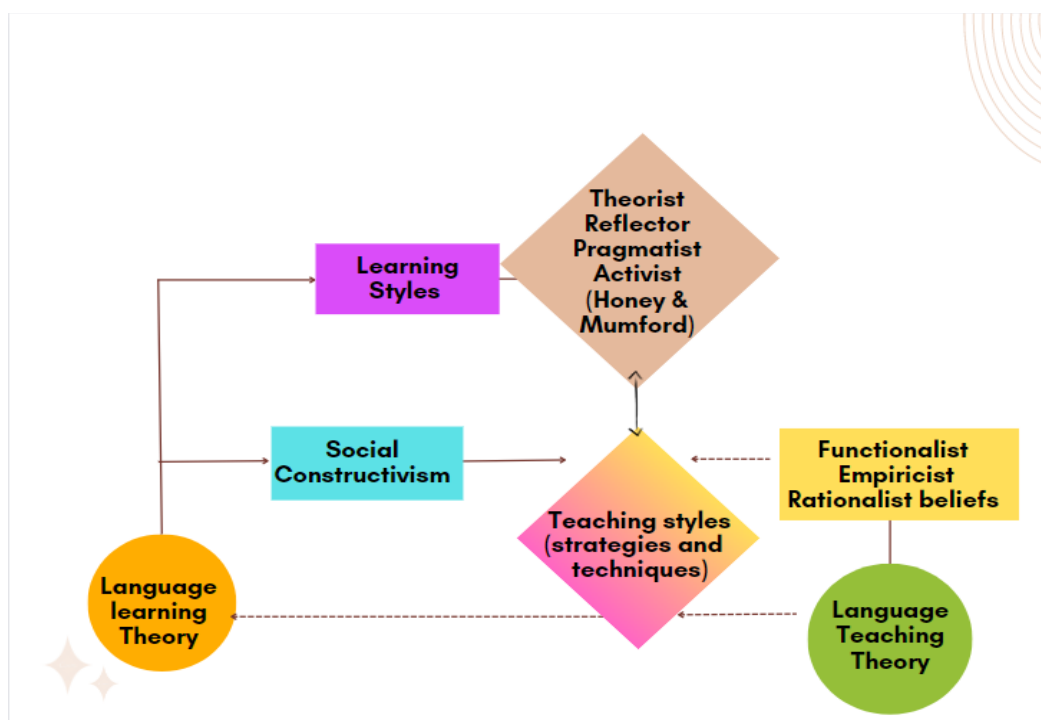
## **2.5. Conceptual Framework**

Based on the review of the LS literature and the language learning and teaching theories, a social constructivist theory of learning and a functionalist perspective on language teaching underpin this study. Such a conceptual framework offers a suitable lens to analyze how teachers' educational beliefs impact their language pedagogy and the inclusion of

learners' individual differences. As mentioned earlier, social constructivism emphasizes the importance of social interaction and language as cultural practice in knowledge construction (Ghaedi et al., 2020; Schreurs & Dumbraveanu, 2014). In a social-constructivist classroom environment, learning derives from students' needs, and teachers construct interactive environments that are inclusive of learners' individual differences, i.e., learning styles. In Figure 1, I represent the two theories of teachers' beliefs about language learning and language teaching.

**Figure 1**

*Language Learning and Language Teaching Theories Underpinning Teachers' Beliefs*



Teachers who adopt a social constructivist and a functionalist perspective in language teaching would recognize that learning styles are not fixed hence there would be a disposition to expose students to different modalities of language learning. Therefore, they would seek to understand each learner's unique learning style and adjust their teaching methods, accordingly, promoting cooperative and collaborative learning. Moreover, a social constructivist approach is particularly relevant in the current post-methods era, where there is

a need to tailor language teaching to local contexts and learners' needs (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, 2006; Powell & Kalina, 2009). As posited by Richards (2008 as cited in Tavakoli & Jones, 2018), interactive decision-making is a crucial aspect of this approach, because it allows teachers to make informed decisions about which methods and techniques are most suitable for each learner in a particular situation.

In conclusion, a social constructivist language learning frame allows a broader view to capture educators' teaching philosophy, i.e., their learning styles and learning background, and their orientation towards pedagogical decision-making which focuses both on individualized and (social) interactive learning techniques, while the functionalist view of language teaching offers a compelling justification for teachers' dominant language teaching styles concerned with wide exposure to active experimentation, which provide room for learners to stretch their learning styles in language learning.

## **2.6. Chapter Summary**

To sum up, this chapter provided a review of the literature that included theories of learning and teaching styles, empirical research on learning style-based pedagogy, and the theoretical underpinnings of language learning and teaching. It also attempted to illustrate the implications of the relationship between learning styles and teaching styles for language teaching. The subsequent chapter will present methodological details appropriate to the study.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

This study explores EFL teachers' beliefs and values about the role of LSs and their EFL teaching approaches concerning students' LSs. The previous chapter focused on the theories of LSs, TSs, and language learning to develop the conceptual framework of this study. The current chapter is organized in the following way: First, it presents the research methodology underpinning this study, then it provides details regarding the research site and sampling, data collection and analysis procedures, and ethical consideration of the study.

#### **3.1. Research Methodology**

Qualitative research is underpinned by an interpretative paradigm, emphasizing participants' subjective experiences and the researcher's subjective interpretation of participants' views (Creswell, 2014). Also, qualitative research focuses on specific research problems and questions relevant to a particular social context (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). For these reasons, the present study employed a qualitative research methodology because it offered a vantage point to gain insights into teachers' values and beliefs about drawing on learners' learning styles (LSs) in their EFL classrooms. Another justification for choosing a qualitative research method was that this study was interested in the participants' subjective perspectives, making it a suitable approach given the researcher's interest in teachers' beliefs about infusing their students' LSs into their pedagogy. In addition, a qualitative approach is deemed appropriate for this study, considering that a great corpus of previous LS-related research mainly employed quantitative research methods to explore the current phenomenon (Peacock, 2001; Rao, 2010; Xiao, 2006). Therefore, the investigation of teachers' beliefs and perspectives on LSs through a qualitative research methodology strengthens the rationale for adopting this research methodology.

Moreover, since the researcher was interested in exploring a particular context, a case study design was regarded as relevant to the current study. The decision to move from a

broad qualitative approach to a case study design can be justified by several factors (Eisenhardt, 1989; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018). Firstly, a case study design allows for a more in-depth exploration of a certain phenomenon, person, or situation, which can be valuable when the research question requires a deeper understanding of a specific context or when the phenomenon under study is complex (Yin, 2018). Secondly, case studies are often used to investigate a particular context or setting, allowing for a detailed exploration of the relationships between various factors within that context. This design is particularly useful when the goal is to understand the unique circumstances that may influence the phenomenon being studied (Stake, 1995). Thirdly, by examining a particular case in detail, researchers can generate hypotheses or insights relevant to broader theoretical debates (Eisenhardt, 1989). Therefore, a case study design was useful to explore how three EFL teachers “understand, describe, interpret, and practice”; it enabled a micro view of teachers’ beliefs, facilitating a holistic yet in-depth understanding of teachers’ “meaning in particular” (Dörnyei, 2007, p.27).

The research design was further narrowed to a multiple instrumental case study with the intention to obtain understanding of a phenomenon within each and across settings (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Thus, it allowed the researcher to “see processes and outcomes across all cases and enable more profound understanding through more powerful descriptions and explanations” (Creswell, 2014, p.68). Consequently, employing a multiple case study design helped illustrate the teachers’ perspectives on learning styles and how these beliefs are influenced by distinctive contextual factors that could impact their pedagogical orientations and language teaching strategies. Thus, such a method provided a more comprehensive and holistic picture of each case because 1) the study did not influence or control the participants’ behaviour; 2) and the researcher was interested in unraveling contextual conditions that influenced the phenomenon under scrutiny; 3) the researcher was not interested in comparing

or contrasting the participants but understanding what common patterns would be observed across the participants given that the sample of the teachers operate within the same unique (NIS) context (Yin, 2017).

### **3.2. Research Site and Sample**

In the present study, the research site consisted of two NIS school contexts because a case can be an individual, a group, a program, or a policy, within a specific context (Merriam, 1998). Given that the research was of an “exploratory nature” (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 39), the choice of using multiple cases allowed for a more in-depth scrutiny of the phenomenon “within each setting and across settings” (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p.550). This allowed for a more comprehensive exploration of teachers’ perspectives on their students’ learning styles as each case provided unique insights into the phenomenon under study (Merriam, 1998). Also, the number of participants and sites makes case studies distinct, which tends to be smaller than those in quantitative research paradigms (Merriam, 1998). Therefore, the current study drew on qualitative sampling strategies to select the participants and research site because they would best yield and describe the distinctive practices and beliefs across various situations or contexts (Merriam, 1998).

This multiple case study consisted of data from two Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools (NIS) catering to gifted learners in two different regions. The reason for selecting these schools as the research site is three-fold. Firstly, compared to mainstream state schools, these NIS schools have been more actively involved in implementing specific educational changes and discussions on teaching approaches. Secondly, these elite schools prioritize using communicative methods focusing on language skills. Thirdly, as part of their multilingual education program, these schools aim to shift from the traditional study of Kazakh/Russian grammar to developing students’ communication skills through differentiated instruction (NIS, 2017). Thus, studying these schools for gifted learners provides relevant information on

their teachers' beliefs and practices regarding the role of LS in developing communicative competence. It can also reveal the best practices associated with EFL pedagogies that will be translated to state schools.

### *Sample Selection*

The present research study selected the participants using non-probabilistic purposeful sampling because it allowed the researcher to choose the individuals based on specific criteria about the phenomena, which was the role of LS in their teaching.

Therefore, I used purposive sampling to recruit three EFL teachers that fit specific criteria and characteristics, which were: 1) EFL teachers working at NIS in Kazakhstan; 2) with more than two years of English language teaching experience. The rationale for using these criteria for participant selection was that they would represent information-rich cases about their pedagogy and the role of students' LSs (Reybold, Lammert & Stribling, 2013). The sample of NIS school teachers was anticipated to provide "insight, revelation, and interpretation" since the teachers in these schools follow a specific curriculum and practice differentiated instruction to accommodate students' learning differences, making them a good source of rich data (Merriam, 1998, p.123; Volpe, 2008). See Table 1 below for the participants' profiles.

**Table 1**

#### *Teacher Participants' Profile*

Participants' Pseudonyms	Age	Gender	Language background	Teaching experience
T1	20-30	Female	Kazakh (L1), Russian (L2), English (FL1),	1-5

			Korean (FL2), German (FL3)	
T2	20-30	Female	Kazakh (L1), Russian (L2), English (FL1)	6-10
T3	30-40	Female	Russian (L1), Kazakh (L2), English (FL1)	15 & more

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### 3.3. Data Collection Instruments

Qualitative data usually needs more than one instrument for validity and reliability (Zainal, 2007). For this reason, I used three tools 1) a questionnaire, 2) practice-based scenarios, and 3) semi-structured interviews to address the research questions because they offered methodological triangulation, added depth and rigor, and strengthened the credibility of this research (Creswell, 2014).

#### *Questionnaires*

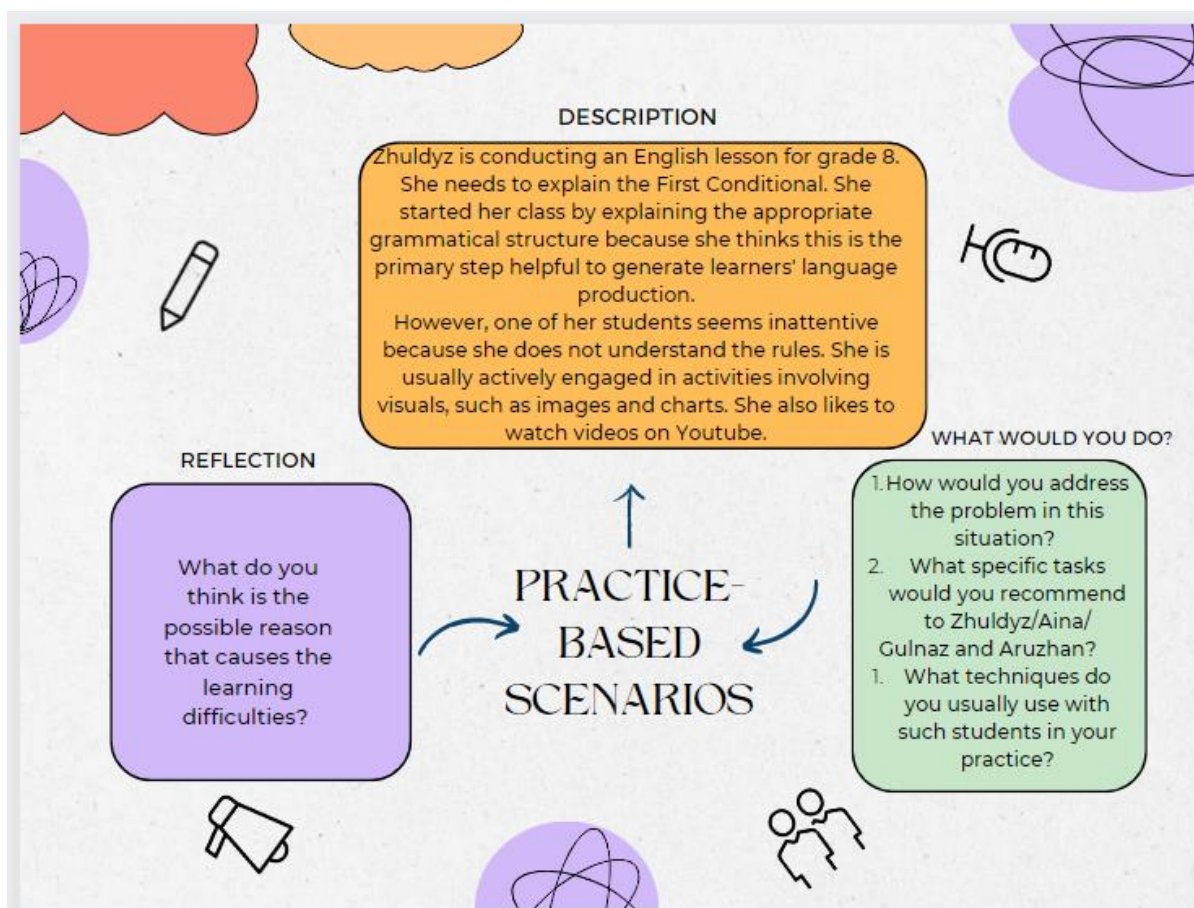
In qualitative research, questionnaires can be used to explore participants' perspectives, values, and beliefs that can offer supporting evidence for other research instruments (Volpe, 2008). For this reason, the researcher used questionnaires to explore teachers' educational experience and their dominant learning styles since they hold implications for their teaching styles (Nessipbayeva & Egger, 2015). The questionnaire consisted of three parts a) participants' demographic information (age, education, working experience), b) teachers' personal learning styles, and c) teachers' pedagogical strategies

coded for themes, not numbers or the quantification of the results (Creswell, 2014). It should be noted that the wording of the questionnaire was an adapted version of Honey and Mumford's (1992). Some researchers show the advantages of modifying the questionnaire by rephrasing and replacing some statements and adding new items to suit the research questions (Wong, 2015). The original questionnaire consisted of 40 statements (Honey & Mumford, 1986) which posed a risk of being time-consuming. To minimize this risk, the researcher adapted the original questionnaire to 16 statements.

### *Practice-based Scenarios*

The second research instrument consisted of hypothetical classroom teaching scenarios, a carefully crafted combination of descriptions and attributes of actual practice-based situations (Lohfeld et al., 2012). This research tool was powerful for understanding participants' judgment of their practices. Thus, the practice-based scenarios elicited and exhumed teachers' reflections about their philosophies and perspectives on their language teaching practices and instructional decisions (Atzmüller & Steiner, 2010). Therefore, designing scenario-based situations enabled the researcher to understand how respondents made decisions about real-life practices since they viewed the scenarios as "an individual's behaviors in reality" rather than participants' self-reports of their beliefs (Kagan, 1992). Research literature suggests that directly asking teachers about their views may not yield in-depth responses if they cannot accurately articulate or label their beliefs (Kagan, 1992). For this reason, the set of descriptions of imaginary classroom scenarios and the reflection questions (see Figure 2) was more productive because they offered teachers structured and straightforward ways to communicate their ideas. Finally, the practice-based scenarios provided participants' insights for the researcher to generate additional in-depth questions for the semi-structured interviews (Ryan et al., 2009).

See Appendix C for the complete classroom-based scenarios.

**Figure 2***Sample of Practice-based Scenarios**Semi-structured Interviews*

This study used individual semi-structured interviews as the final research tool to explore the relationship between teachers' beliefs about their language teaching practices and their potential for activating their students' LSs. The researcher obtained rich and detailed data through the semi-structured interview because each participant told their "story" (Ryan et al., 2009). The interviews were conducted in English with an alternative to answer in Kazakh or Russian to ensure the teachers could express their views comfortably. The flexibility of the semi-structured interview allowed the interviewer to oversee the questions and use probes that encouraged the interviewee to expand and discuss their learning styles-

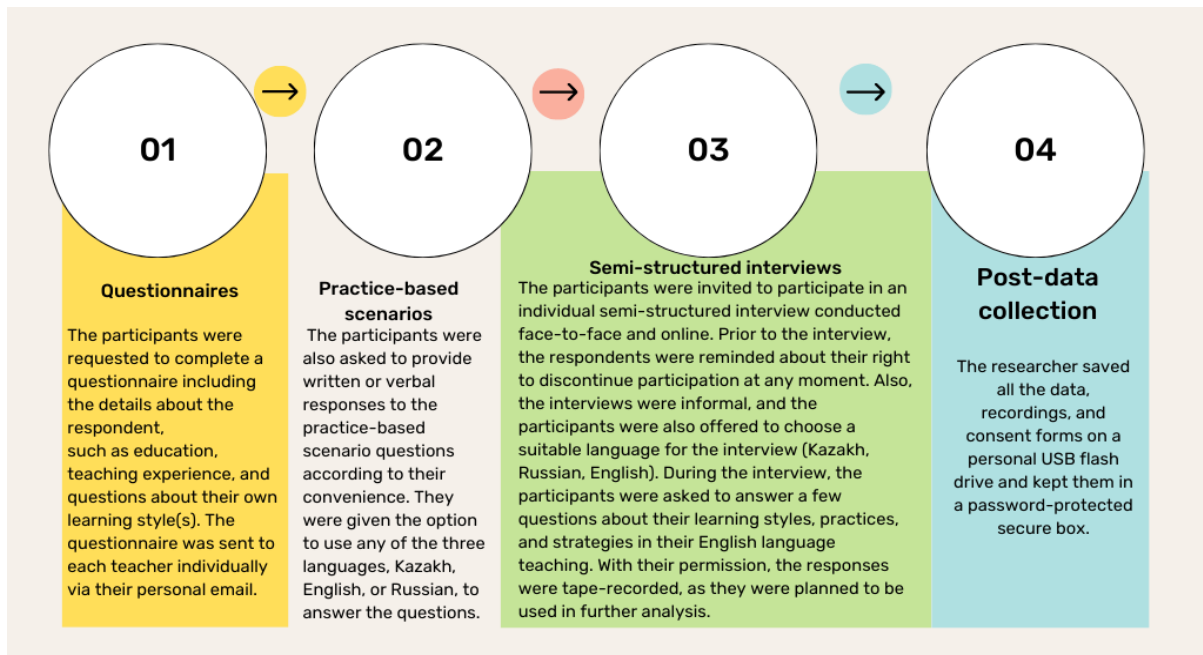
related teaching practices, and language teaching beliefs that underpin their pedagogical reasoning skills.

### **3.4. Data Collection Procedures**

After obtaining ethical approval from the GSE Ethics Committee, the researcher piloted the research instruments with two peers who have teaching and research experience to review and further strengthen the instruments. Secondly, I sought information about the sites and the best ways to gain participant access from a gatekeeper who was informed about the study's purpose. Thirdly, I emailed recruitment letters containing research information (aims, research questions, and participants' rights) and the researcher's contact details to the gatekeepers at each site, who forwarded them to all teachers. I then selected only EFL teachers with at least two years of teaching experience from the responses and invited interested teachers who fit the selection criteria to participate in a qualitative questionnaire, practice-based scenarios, and an individual face-to-face or online interview. I emphasized that their participation was voluntary and sent informed consent forms outlining the study's purpose, risks and benefits, and their rights to teachers who agreed to participate. The researcher also stressed that there would be no penalty for teachers who decided to withdraw from the study and requested that they sign the consent forms and return them to the researcher before data collection could commence (Dörnyei, 2007). In sum, before the data collection, the participants were given full information about the procedures and expectations for participation, see Figure 3 for the data collection process.

### **Figure 3**

*Data Collection Procedure*



### *Data Analysis Procedures*

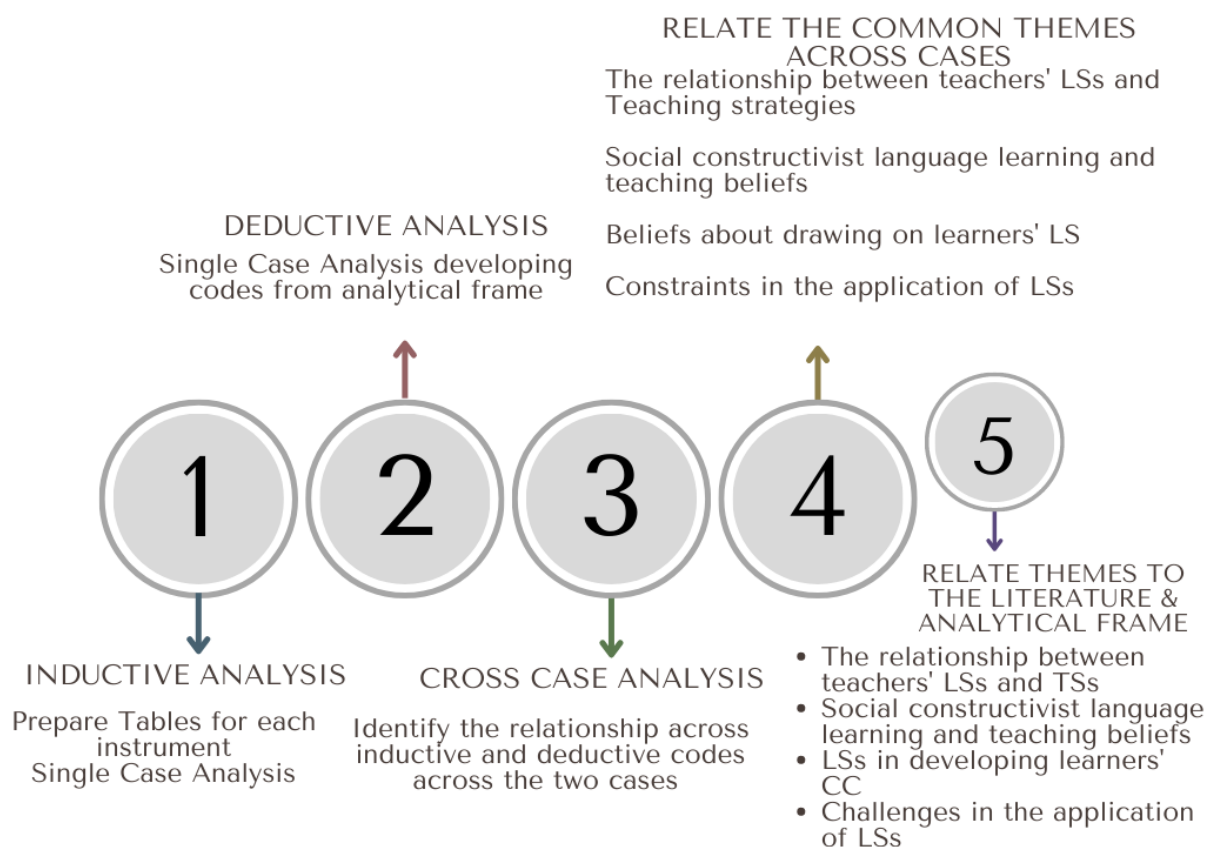
The current study employed multiple research instruments, including questionnaires, practice-based scenarios, and interviews, which required various steps in data analysis. I followed the steps of qualitative data analysis proposed by Creswell (2014).

I adopted a hybrid coding strategy involving inductive and deductive methods to analyze multiple datasets. I organized the questionnaire responses, the classroom-based scenarios, and the semi-structured interviews by creating a table for each data set. Then I identified keywords or phrases using inductive codes in the three research tools to unravel unexpected narratives, followed by deductive coding searching for predefined codes related to the conceptual frame. Finally, I compared the codes from the three instruments by creating a three-column table to identify similarities, differences, and patterns in the participants' LS and TS views and beliefs. Given that this multiple case study design focused on an in-depth exploration of teachers' LS perspectives as the phenomenon, I did not compare themes across cases but searched for the relationship and the commonalities between the codes that

generated well-defined themes. Figure 4 below represents the analysis process and the themes emerged as a result of the cross-case analysis.

**Figure 4**

*Data Analysis Process*



### 3.5. Ethical Considerations

To ensure ethical data collection, the anonymity and confidentiality of participants and sites must be preserved (Creswell, 2014). Although there was no more than a minimal risk involved for the participants, I undertook several precautions to safeguard and protect the participants' identities in this research project.

#### *Confidentiality and Anonymity*

As per ethical conduct guidelines in research, I ensured my participants' confidentiality and anonymity throughout the research process (Creswell, 2014). First, the

recruitment letters went through a gatekeeper to avoid power relations. Also, through verbal consent, I reconfirmed their participation and allowed the teachers to choose a convenient time and place for the interviews to maintain their anonymity. Furthermore, I ensured that the participants' identities were hidden, and their names replaced by pseudonyms and stored the research data in a secure location on a password-protected personal computer. Finally, I also reminded the participants that any public report of this research would not include any direct identifiers or other individual information, such as the school names, teachers' names, gender, and age, by which they could be identified (Creswell, 2014).

### ***Risks and Benefits***

Since qualitative research cannot claim that there will be no risks, the researcher must try to minimize the risks that may occur and take every necessary step to ensure confidentiality during all the stages of this research (Dörnyei, 2007). To minimize emotional risks, the questions did not cover controversial or sensitive topics such as religion, politics, or sexual orientation that could cause participants emotional discomfort. Also, I minimized the potential risk of teachers' discomfort about sharing their ideas by informing them that they could refrain from answering any questions that made them uncomfortable or that they could withdraw their participation at any point without any penalty (Dörnyei, 2007). I also reminded participants that their responses would be anonymous and not shared with the administration or impact their school employment. Furthermore, I minimized linguistic challenges by making teachers comfortable responding in Kazakh, Russian, and English.

Although the study did not provide any economic benefits for the participants, it helped illuminate the multidimensional nature of teachers' pedagogical endeavors. Teachers are at the heart of their classroom practices, therefore through participating in this research study, they could articulate their beliefs and share perspectives on the various issues that hold

great importance to educational changes. Therefore, through their participation in the research the teachers might gain valuable insights into their practices, strengths and challenges in their EFL classrooms.

### **3.6. Chapter Summary**

The purpose of this thesis is to explore Kazakhstani EFL teachers' beliefs about the role of learning styles and the implication of their instructional strategies for students' individual differences. This chapter has presented the research methodology relevant to address the research purpose. It illustrated why qualitative study broadly underpins the project, which was further narrowed to a multiple case study design, allowing for an in-depth analysis of unique cases within and across the settings. It has also highlighted the sampling strategy – purposive sampling, and ethical considerations underpinning the study. The following chapter 4 will illustrate the findings of this research.

## Chapter 4: Findings

This study aimed to explore Kazakhstani EFL teachers' perspectives and beliefs about the role of Learning Styles in their EFL pedagogy. The previous chapter presented the research methodology, data collection and analysis procedures, and the ethical considerations of the study. This chapter presents the findings that emerged from three research instruments 1) a questionnaire providing the participants' profiles and examining teachers' Learning Styles (LSs) and Teaching Styles (TSs), 2) practice-based scenarios, which revealed the teachers' views on language teaching classroom practices and instructional decisions and 3) a semi-structured interview, which aimed to illustrate the teachers' values about Learning Styles. This chapter answers the central research question and sub-questions that are:

**RQ1:** What are EFL teachers' values and beliefs about drawing on their students' LSs in developing English language competencies?

### Sub Questions:

1. How do EFL teachers' LSs relate to their TSs?
2. What language learning and teaching beliefs underpin EFL teachers' TSs in developing students' English language competencies?

As mentioned in the data analysis section, hybrid coding allowed the researcher to create the themes that emanated from the cross-case analysis. Therefore, the themes that emerged are as follows:

a) The Relationship between Teachers' Learning Styles and Teaching Styles; b) Social Constructivist Language Learning and Teaching Beliefs; c) the Role of Learning Styles in Developing Learners' EFL Competences; and d) EFL Teachers' Challenges in the Application of LSs.

These themes formed the study results to address the research questions presented in the following order: 1) How do EFL teachers' LSs relate to their TSs, 2) What language

learning and teaching beliefs underpin EFL teachers' TSs in developing students' English language competencies?

The main research question associated with EFL teachers' values and beliefs about drawing on their students' LSs in developing English language competencies will be addressed in the final section of this chapter. I will now answer a sub-question.

#### **4.1. The Relationship between Learning Styles and Teaching Styles**

To understand the relationship between teachers' learning and instructional styles, I asked them to indicate how they learn and EFL teaching strategies in the questionnaires, practice-based scenarios, and interviews. The results from these three data tools showed a clear social constructivist link between the teachers' Reflector and Activist LSs and their teaching strategies, including a preference for differentiation and multimodality in their TSs.

##### ***Social Constructivist Learning and Teaching Styles***

The three datasets revealed that social constructivism underpins these teachers' LSs (Richards & Rodgers, 2001), while their TSs are aligned with functionalist or communicative views of language teaching. The literature review revealed that a LS typical of social-constructivist orientation emphasizes active engagement, collaboration, and reflection. Therefore, across the datasets the participants' LSs value hands-on experiences, working collaboratively with others, and reflecting on their experiences to create meaning and understanding of their world. For example, Table 2 captures the dominant LSs that teachers preferred and their major TSs, which connect with social constructivism. The description of each LS emerging from the data analysis is presented according to the LSs framework developed by Honey and Mumford (1986).

#### **Table 2**

##### ***Descriptions of Learning Styles***

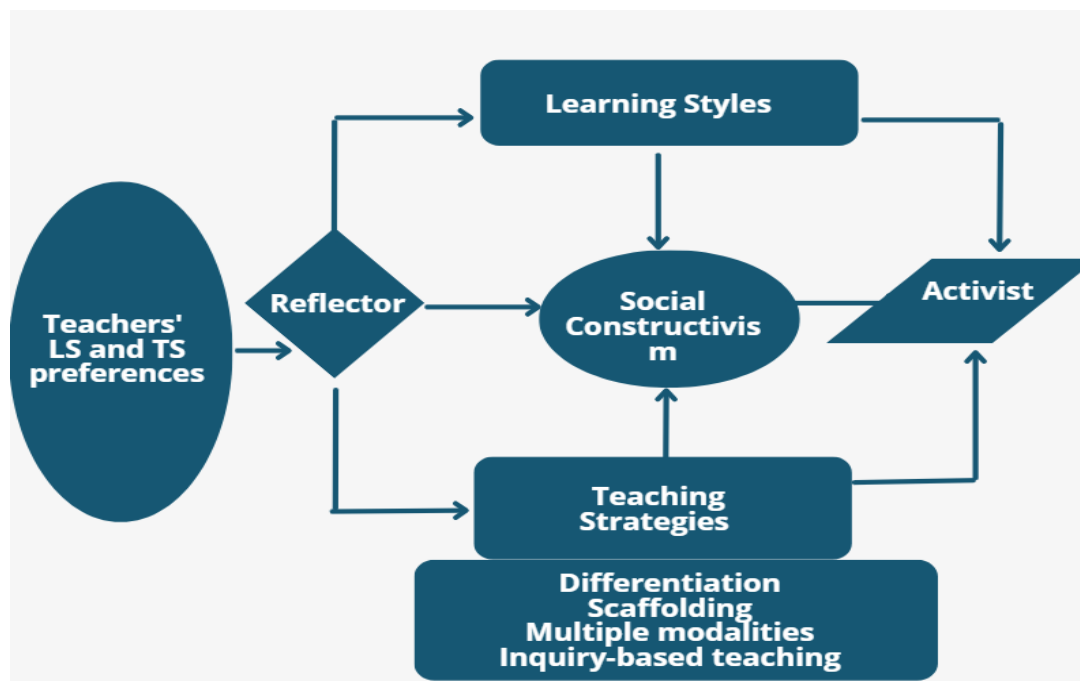
Teachers' Learning Style Preferences	Description of Learning Styles	Teaching Strategies
Reflector	Reflectors tend to approach learning thoroughly and carefully. This learner likes it when they are given time to think, watch and listen or read the information in advance. Activities they may like doing are getting feedback from peers; showing how to work out the answers in class, engaging in paired discussions, problem-solving tasks to reflect on world problems. Learning is found effective when Reflectors hear and know what they are learning.	Inquiry-based teaching  Scaffolding  Differentiation  Multiple modalities
Activist	Activists prefer to use active forms of learning; activities such as role playing; spontaneous pair-group discussions and interactions; team games. Likes to approach learning inductively, e.g., illustrate a topic using a video or pictures as a warm-up.	

Note: Adapted from Honey & Mumford (1992); Learning Process Activities by University of Worcester

As a result, the findings across the research instruments suggest that Kazakhstani NIS teachers' LS and TS preferences have shifted from traditional, teacher-centered approaches that emphasize passive learning and rote language memorization to learner-centered teaching methods. Figure 5 captures the results of the relationship between EFL teachers' learning and teaching styles.

### Figure 5

*The Relationship between EFL Teachers' Learning and Teaching Styles*



The figure above presents the findings concerning the teachers' Learning Style (LS) preferences, obtained by the Honey and Mumford Learning Styles model, which also served as a basis for the Questionnaire on teaching preferences adapted for this study. Based on the teachers' responses to the Questionnaire, the data illustrated that all the participants are Reflectors and Activists. From the descriptions of these LSs (see Table 2), the teachers with Reflector and Activist LSs value teaching which involves engaging learners in various forms of active learning and reflecting. It is worth noting that teachers' use of these teaching methods implies the active forms of learning underpinned by Reflector and Activist LSs, which encapsulate the accommodation of various learning modalities (i.e., learning styles), including Visual, Auditory, Reading/Writing and Kinesthetic. This means a clear relationship exists between their LS preferences and their EFL TSs. In addition, as mentioned in the Literature relevant to this study, there seems to be an association between teachers' own learning styles and the teaching strategies that they deploy in their EFL classrooms. Therefore, across the datasets, it was confirmed that teachers' Reflector and Activist LSs concurred with their EFL teaching strategies which include differentiation, inquiry-based

learning, scaffolding, and using multiple modalities in their teaching. The first TS that often went hand-in-hand with the participants' LS preference was differentiated teaching.

### ***Differentiated Teaching and Teachers' Learning Styles***

The findings illustrated that all three teachers' dominant LS was that of an Activist (as revealed by the questionnaires), and that they apply a technique called "differentiation" which is also the leading approach within the NIS schools' system. In this light, these teachers adopt a social-constructivist approach to learning and indicate the belief that a conventional one-size-fits-all teaching style does not work. Therefore, across the data, dominant themes related to differentiated instruction ensure that all students are able to engage with the material in ways that are meaningful to them. They indicated that by providing students with multiple pathways to learning, teachers can help them construct their own understanding of the content and take ownership of their learning. For example, T1 remarked that she tries to "use various activities and visual aids" in designing lesson activities. This participant further continued by recommending the imaginary teacher (in the scenarios) several tips to differentiate classroom activities: "Perhaps, that student should be assigned a role as a teacher or someone who assesses other students' performance. While everyone is preparing for their roles, the teacher could work with that student and provide scaffolding" (T1).

Similarly, T3 also acknowledged that it would be relevant to use a varied approach in providing tasks and that they should be differentiated, considering students' English language learning needs. In her response to imaginary scenario 2, this teacher emphasized that the activities should be in harmony with students' learning demands:

The teacher needs to think of different approaches for different types of students to group students; those may be students who are more confident. So, they can be given some examples, without an explicit explanation, right, and then make out the rule,

they can figure out the rule, how to use this or that. While for another group here, for example, a rule unless it is verbalized.

Therefore, the teachers regarded differentiation as a tool to approach each student according to their abilities, interests, and individual differences. Moreover, the teachers also believe that differentiation can be useful to provide a learner with a choice and ensure their autonomy, allowing them to choose the preferable mode of work: “I usually give them a choice like if you are willing to work individually, so you're up to do that. So there is no such kind of limitation to do that” (T1).

The findings suggest that teachers use different types of differentiated instruction as applicable to their teaching practices. With regard to this, T1 mentioned that she predominantly employs differentiation by task with “less proficient students”:

I mainly use differentiation by task. I also try to focus on the main points of the lesson, like trying to maybe simplify the task a bit and then, like, complicate it gradually. Sometimes I would use, like, their L1 or L2, like Russian or Kazakh, Because I could see their struggle. So, they find it difficult to produce the language and if I forced them to speak more English, they would be discouraged.

As suggested by this teacher, differentiation becomes relevant when she observes learners' challenges in using the target language. In such cases, the teacher uses “translanguaging” to allow them to draw on the languages in their linguistic repertoire as a way to deal with student's English-speaking anxiety. On this matter, however, T2 expressed a slightly different stance. Despite being aware of some of their learners' low proficiency in comprehension, the teacher challenges her students to understand the content in English. However, this teacher's instructional decision is associated with the intentional and strategic use of multiple modalities, i.e., differentiation by resource:

Sometimes they struggle. I know. It's not their first language, it's not their mother tongue, and when they watch YouTube, for example, videos on the lessons here. If they do not see the subtitles there, and they ask me, "Can you please switch on the

subtitles?" because sounds coming from the computer are not enough, or they don't understand it. Can you please switch on the subtitles sometimes? And I say, 'Sorry, I cannot'. First, you have to listen. And the second time, we can see it and watch the video with subtitles.

By referring to the peculiarities of multimodal learning methods, the teacher ensures to differentiate content at the same time as accommodating auditory and visual learners. Thus, it can be concluded that teachers' application of differentiation and multimodal TS encapsulates different forms of scaffolding that are inclusive of several learning style modalities.

### ***Scaffolding and Multimodal Teaching***

The data analysis further yielded an inherent link between the teachers' own LSs and their TSs, since their Reflector and Activist LSs value the notion of scaffolding to support EFL students' English language acquisition and mitigate any potential learning difficulties. The responses across the study's research instruments indicated, teachers' scaffolding strategy is done through a thorough and structured way of instruction. For instance, T1 emphasized the use of practical examples and situations:

If you're explaining with examples, they can do it better. If you give situations...not just saying like, you need to do this, this, this, this, please start, no. Each task and each step should be explained. So, the first is to identify the purpose, for example, how you are going to do this? And then we explain. And then I say every time, make notes, make notes, make notes. I'm saying make notes. Because also, this is one of the skills that they will be using in universities and colleges.

Across the data sets, teachers' LS preference was visible in their tendency to use an inductive approach as a student-oriented and scaffolding method. Such a pattern illustrates that the teachers hold a functionalist stance on language teaching. This mostly applies to the introduction of grammatical structures, where the teachers make use of indirect methods to allow students to arrive at an understanding of language features, although with errors, rather

than making them learn fixed and repetitive patterns. All three teachers recommended activities, such as building conceptual knowledge by exposing the students to authentic tasks from a wide range of resources and forms rather than focusing solely on language elements in an isolated manner. For example, T1 shares her perspective on this point:

Instead of just explaining the rules, it would be better to introduce the grammar using the content. For instance, learning can start by reading a text/watching a video/listening to the recording (in other words content). Then using this content work with linguistic features.

T3 also elaborated on this issue by indicating that she does not consider the drilling strategy useful in classroom-based scenarios. On the contrary, she believes learners should be allowed to practice the language by manipulating different structures through gradual and extensive scaffolding:

I think this scenario is not a very effective strategy to start drilling the words or sentence without making students, first of all, build a sentence or words; or use this phrase or word in the sentence. Usually, when it is a new word, we, for example, start with the word new word, we can show the image. After that, we asked to create phrases with this word. After phrases, they can put it in a sentence.

This point was further supported by T2, who argues that “using stable patterns in their speeches is not good. Learners should think outside the box, considering real-life situations” (T2). For this reason, T2 prefers to explain a topic indirectly, based on relatable examples.

I don't start the lesson with a detailed explanation. I just take an example. For example, if it's first conditional, I say like, if you boil the water, you can make tea or something like that. Yeah, make some examples from real life. And then I ask them, What do you think that we are going to learn today? I think it's common for teachers.

She continued:

If I don't find an approach to that student, or that even the explanation to the student doesn't help, I think I will just make examples. Examples from the lessons. Have you ever faced a situation...? That explains a subject of our topic. Explain with examples.

Not the whole topic I need, but they are in the way of understanding, it may not be the full understanding, but somehow halfway or full understanding. Then that student is ready to continue.

In doing so, however, T3 is mindful that this approach may not suit all students, given that they have individual differences in learning. Thus, she does not hesitate to provide support at a word level if need be. She expands this view in her following words:

As practice indicates, some students still find it hard to understand the meaning of a new word/phrase inductively. Therefore, teachers have to accept this fact and make a learner to search for a translation on his/her own and then ask him/her to define the word on his/her own way and make up at least one example sentence.

Therefore, the teachers highlight *scaffolding* as an essential differentiation strategy to support an individual learner in addressing learning difficulties, which is aligned with their LS preference. Since scaffolding is tightly linked to Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (1978), in which a learner should be exposed to the kind of assistance to become independent and knowledgeable, peer support is an integral part of this social interaction. Based on this, it is evident that teachers often employ peer reviewing and scaffolding as part of their differentiated pedagogy. In her recommendation to a classroom scenario with a student's learning difficulty T1 indicated: "Perhaps, this student should be assigned a role as a teacher or someone who assesses other students' performance. While everyone is preparing for their roles, the teacher could work with that student and provide scaffolding" (T1).

In addition, T2 also shared that she involves her students in assisting their peers struggling with understanding:

I ask other students to help them. It really helps, when some students, they're confused, like, I did not understand the task. Three of them or two of them are totally unaware. And then I ask the students like "others understand?" and then, "can you please Sanzhar, for example, help me assist in this step. And you will be in a role of,

for example, a teacher, and can you please work in pairs and explain to your peer how it works?”.

Furthermore, scaffolding is achieved by means of multiple modalities, as suggested by the participating teachers. From scenarios and interviews, it is visible that the majority of the activities cater to the Visual learning style, wherein all three participants’ instructional activities are seen to include various visual objects and props that facilitate visual learning acquisition. T3 demonstrated how multimodal activities can meet various learning styles:

I use pre-teaching tasks, for instance, by building up some vocabulary; sets of topical vocabulary, maybe working with pictures, again, with definitions, matching them, or maybe watching the video and then eliciting some vocabulary from that. So that is like, step-by-step preparation for their final speech, final product.

In addition, T2 uses multimodal tools as a (procedural) method to scaffold comprehension: “I’m working focusing on that student when I see that those students don’t understand something. Then, I come up to them and draw something in circles or something, something on their textbooks”.

T3 added that she uses images more strategically for students to make sense of language patterns and draw an association between visuals and language:

Usually, in a presentation for example, when the first part is presenting, we use visuals accompanied by speech-like statements. So that the students can understand from the picture, not only from like listening and the reading, but also from the image and associate, make association and connection between language and visual presentation. For example, if the weather is sunny, I will go to a picnic. So, we can show the picture with sunny weather and somebody who is having a picnic on the field. So, in this situation the student matches if his understanding corresponds to the situation.

Coincidentally, this response illustrates that the teacher used a learning style-related approach (in this case visual) as a method of scaffolding. In this regard, T2 attributes the

application of visuals to the accessibility of an array of digital technologies, which makes it easier for teachers to draw on during teaching and learning. In addition, T2 highlights the salience of multiple modalities in learning and justifies it by positing that it is the era of technology: “And we just try to just show it on the screen, like, directly and they are focused on the screen. Because it's the age of technology and the images are on the screen. They should see”.

To sum up, based on the above-given evidence, there is a visible conformity between the teachers' Reflector and Activist LSs and their established teaching strategies, including differentiation and scaffolding via the use of multiple modalities. That is, the kind of teaching strategies that expose students to be engaged in different modes of activities, and are tailored to enhance learning outcomes through reflection, fits the descriptions of the Reflector and Activist LSs (Honey & Mumford, 1989). In addition, the teachers' values about these teaching methods are heavily rooted within the Social Constructivist learning paradigm. One finding to note, however, is that teachers do not explicitly consider LSs as part of their instructional methods. Their responses show that the display of LSs during classroom teaching is often coincidental and is observed as a natural occurrence rather than a component of purposefully designed instructional decisions and practices.

I will now move on to describe the findings to address the sub-question 2 which is:

#### **4.2. Social Constructivist Language Learning and Teaching Beliefs**

Given that teachers are Activists and Reflectors, the results highlighted that social constructivist values of language learning and the functionalist (communicative) language teaching perspectives underpin their EFL pedagogy. The results across all the datasets revealed that a social constructivist orientation was visible in their beliefs about 1) their role as EFL practitioners, 2) the role of learners, and 3) the role of the learning environment in EFL acquisition.

*The Role of an EFL Teacher*

The data showed that teachers have a Social Constructivist belief about the role of EFL teachers. First, all three teachers indicated that learning should be highly learner-centered, where the learners are regarded as “critical thinkers” (T3), and “global citizens” (T2). Also, they believe that learning is contextual and situational, meaning that it is influenced by the social and cultural context in which it occurs. As such, they create learning activities that are relevant to students’ lives and experiences, encouraging students to make connections between their own experiences and the new knowledge they are acquiring. Accordingly, T1 expressed that her main principle lies in creating a meaningful learning context, indicative of functionalist orientation towards teaching by drawing on real life situations and language use in a particular situation and context:

My aim is to teach students a foreign language that is, especially in our context, it's their third language. And I do understand the cognitive pressure for the students that they might face during these lessons. And so my principles, mainly, first is to engage students, to make their learning meaningful and relevant. So I try to use real life situations, so that or immerse them into them, to expose them to that kind of situation so that they could be ready to use that language in their real life.

This functionalist perspective is also visible in T2’s EFL TS which reflects her social constructivist philosophy:

My role is, you know, to conduct the knowledge which will build the path, which will help my students to gain some kind of skills that they will use in the future. And it's not about every time telling them how to use Present Simple and Present Perfect and all this grammatical stuff, but some communication skills, or writing styles. I’m teaching them to use those skills in their future life.

T3 pointed out the importance of teaching students to become critical thinkers:

I think the main role of an English teacher is to help students with learning language to apply it to their future profession, of course. But alongside with it, English language methodology today is oriented, I think, on critical thinking a lot. Because

what we see in resources to the teaching resources, like textbooks and other resources, the content usually like touches upon controversial issues, global issues, issues with United Nations activities, climate change, environmental issues, and that is why I think, in parallel with language teaching, I also teach students critical thinking and analysis: to analyze text, to analyze everything with what they hear. I think it's also connected a lot with thinking and with reasoning.

On the whole, the following extracts indicate that the teachers acknowledge that educators today have different roles with the major principle being affiliated with being a facilitator promoting critical thinking skills and communicative competence in students. In this regard, T3 added:

Their (students') receptive skills can be trained, like as many times as possible, even out of class. For these, there should be a facilitator who will make sure that they are speaking all the time, or they are writing, sitting, and writing. So that is why in the lesson, we facilitate as teachers their speaking and their communicative potential to make sure that they communicate and exchange ideas. Because at home they don't have such a, you know, environment, not all of them, very few students have the environment to speak.

Consequently, the results indicated that EFL teachers' beliefs are underpinned by social constructivism because teachers are seen as facilitators of learning who guide and support learners in constructing their own understanding of the English language. The teachers also appeared to hold functionalist perspectives on language teaching. They believe that EFL teachers must create opportunities for students to engage in authentic tasks that equip them with life skills and that EFL teachers create a supportive learning environment to accommodate individual differences. Interestingly their EFL beliefs about teachers' roles suggest that they value learners as active agents in their own learning, and that language learning is a social and collaborative process.

### *The Role of a Learner*

From the analysis, it was clear that a social constructivist view of learning and a functionalist perspective of teaching also underpin the teachers' beliefs about the role of learners. The results revealed that EFL learners are seen as active agents in their own learning. They are responsible for constructing their own understanding of the world around them through interaction with their environment and others. As such, learners play an active role in the learning process, and their role is to engage with the material, interact with their peers, and construct their own knowledge. Such a stance of the teachers supports the functionalist beliefs about foreign language learning. For example, T1 believes that learning is effective and engaging when students are actively involved in the learning process by carrying out various hands-on activities. One instance of this can be seen from the extract below.

When students take an active role during the lesson, I find them beneficial for students, and I could see the students' engagement as well. So it might be some games, maybe some activities to develop students creativity, like, when they do something with their hands, for instance, different leaflets, maybe they do some videos, so projects as well. So mainly through different activities, so trying to make it various.

Moreover, T2 in her response to the hypothetical classroom scenario, suggested that teachers provide students with scaffolded activities to facilitate their independent learning skills:

It would be better for a teacher not to provide a student with a translation right away he/she asks. See, to be an inquiry student is a part of the learning process. Make a learner search for a translation on his/her own and then ask him/her to define the word in his/her own way and make up at least one example sentence.

Furthermore, the teachers' Reflector LS was also visible in their belief about students' role. On this issue, T3 added:

Sometimes we learn a lot from our students...a lot. Because they tell us about different kind of resources that are useful for them or they sometimes prompt us with the ways how they do it, sometimes they can help with, like, set their rules on how to do that activity or how they could change it. So student reflection also helps us. This is why it is important to always do student reflection.

The above extract shows that learning is highly productive and beneficial, provided it focuses on the mutual knowledge exchange between the teacher and students. According to the teachers, active student engagement in learning can actually guide the teachers to make appropriate teaching decisions. To sum up, the findings elucidated that the teachers' beliefs about the students' role in the EFL classroom were guided by theories underpinning language learning and teaching - social constructivism and the functionalist orientation. This is further supported by the teachers' perspectives on the role of the EFL environment in student learning, which will be described in the following section.

### ***The Role of the EFL Learning Environment***

The analysis of teachers' responses to practice-based scenarios and interviews revealed a pattern associated with personalized and student-centered learning, where the teachers put students' needs and personal interests as the main priority in creating a conducive learning environment while enabling the learners to take the lead in their own progress. In pursuit of this, teachers invite students to collaborate and cooperate to craft learning together. In this light, T3 added:

When I give an example after an explanation, I take somebody's name from the students, use the students name and make an example and sometimes try to make it humorous to make some in a funny way, and then they will start to make their own sentences. They can do it in a funny way, but they will understand because the example will be clear for them. The example with one of their students, and after, they will write a sentence. Also the teacher can ask the students to exchange, for example,

three sentences. So, the students write three sentences, and the teacher asks them to exchange copy books.

Interestingly, the data revealed that the teachers consider collaborative learning as creating meaningful classroom environments because it is inclusive of students' voices in peer and group work. As the extract below suggests, T3 stresses the value of peer-directed learning, positing that it makes students more responsible and critical:

I would change it to create sentences in the copybook, then peer reviewing the sentences with a classmate and after that, read out the best example or the best sentence in pairs. Also, this one can work in pairs and groups. So, they can also learn from each other, and they will take this responsibility that they will check each other's work.

T2 also shared this view by suggesting that students learn from each other's mistakes:

If a learner makes mistakes, I tend to put down those errors and then show them later individually. Or I write those misused words/phrases on the board and let other students guess what is wrong with them. This way, students are able to learn from each other.

The participants also indicated the salience of learners' prior knowledge in constructing the new learning. This is echoed in T1's words: "they recreate the task, but in another form, in the form of dialogue or in the form of a written work. So first of all, they need to be exposed, and after they can connect it to their experience, and then they can create some new outcome with this material".

One recurring theme from the data was teachers' beliefs that learning should be tailored for the needs of each learner. These beliefs reflect social constructivist principles of language learning because they view teachers and students as co-constructors in the learning process, where they collaboratively build and construct knowledge. This shows that teachers believe that learning is a two-way process in which both the learner and teacher are engaged, as visible in the extract below.

The teacher should discuss with the student, what are the opportunities, and if the student is ready for those opportunities? So, in this case, a teacher with the students, they build an action plan for this together. They will discuss it, and they will do it and the teacher will present like the resources for this. So it's always discussed with the students to make sure that the student understands the expectations in the requirements (T3).

However, although the teachers' beliefs about learning and teaching demonstrated an inclusive approach to teaching mixed ability classes, which could be seen in their above-described teaching strategies, they raised several concerns with regard to accommodating students' diverse individual needs.

#### **4.3. The Role of Learning Styles in Developing Learners' EFL Competences**

The results indicated that teachers' LSs coincided with their dominant pedagogical approaches, which were guided by the beliefs underpinned by the Social Constructivist paradigm of language learning and the functionalist views about teaching. The data also revealed that those Social Constructivist and functionalist perspectives shape (or were visible in) the teachers' conception and consideration of learners' individual differences.

##### ***Teachers' Beliefs of Individual Differences and Learning Styles***

Overall, all three participants demonstrated their awareness of students' learning differences and styles. Firstly, when asked what they thought caused learning difficulties for students, T1 commented:

Each student is unique. They have their own preferences. Someone might prefer working individually, someone might prefer working in groups. Also, some students prefer answering orally rather than writing something, or vice versa. And so on. I don't think that these activities work well, for everyone. But that's why I tried to use like, various modes of teaching during my lesson.

Likewise, T2 posited:

Here the student prefers to be taught by watching a clear step-by-step structure of a sentence in the Present Simple tense. It is okay. Because it is simply the learner's preference, and he/she is confident that it would make him/her easily use the tense in his/her speech.

On the issue of individual differences, T3 emphasized the mixed ability and academic levels in EFL classes, specifically in Kazakhstan. The following extract demonstrates the teacher's comment:

This student is different from other students. So, the group are not homogeneous, but there are students of different levels. I think it's kind of a mixed group and especially in grade eight, if we talk about Kazakhstan, so, in grade eight, it can be students with upper intermediate level, who started learning English, for example, from grade one, or students who had difficulties at the beginning and then they have this gap in English. So, it's no wonder that in grade eight, there can be a student who doesn't understand the rules, especially when English is the third language after Russian and then English.

While T1 and T2, showed implicit awareness of the existence of learners' differences in learning, T3 was seen as more precise and firmer in her perception that the issue was caused by the mismatch between students' learning styles and teaching strategies applied. Moreover, T3 evidently frames the learners' individual differences as "multiple intelligences" and "diversity of students", seen in the following quote: "It depends on the student's intelligence, according to Gardner, multiple intelligence theory. So, this student might have developed music, for example, competence or music proficiency or scientific proficiency and less linguistic proficiency". She continued that "in class somebody is a kinesthetic learner, somebody will be a visual learner. Another one will be audio and some, usually they are mixed, but with some of one type of learning styles" (T3).

Notably, T3 also suggested that contemporary EFL teaching methodology gears towards learners' individual characteristics, mentioning Learning Styles as one of them:

“methodology depends on psychological instruments and research on students’ personalities, and to make diagnostics of students learning, and way of thinking, type of thinking, their learning styles, their multiple intelligences, their abilities and so on”.

She further commented that one way to tackle learner differences is to apply diagnostic tests to identify those learner characteristics in advance: “This is why the teacher first of all should know what students are in the class and do we have some diagnostics. Then to decide which approach for which group of students to use” (T3).

By the same token, when asked how the teachers determined students’ individual characteristics, T1 responded that she naturally comes to obtain more knowledge of her learners’ learning preferences through her observation over the time: “I don't do some specific tests. But I usually recognize it throughout the lessons. I do see some patterns in my students’ learning activities. So, throughout these lessons, I could see what each student prefers”.

However, as a final note to the interview questions, T1 posited that it would be more relevant to identify her students' learning styles based on reliable instruments:

It would be a good idea to do this kind of immediate research on my students' learning styles. Because I usually do it intuitively, by my own observation, but I think it will be like more beneficial to do that, based on some data.

Conversely T3, who previously touched upon the idea of identifying learner characteristics via diagnostic tests, shared that she personally uses special tests and information gained from school psychologists:

We have different kinds of tests, for example, for proficiency, we have tests. For the way of thinking, “style of thinking” by David Kolb, it’s about different styles of thinking. This is what I also do. And as for Multiple Intelligences, like linguistic, music, math, this is usually done by our school psychologists, we get information from them.

Lastly, even though T2 is cognizant that the majority of her students have Visual as their dominant LS, she did not disclose information about her LS identification technique.

### *Different Learners – a Different Approach*

A recurring finding is that the teachers focus on student-centered teaching styles such as inquiry-based learning, scaffolding activities and differentiated instruction to address learners' individual needs. As part of such teaching methods, teachers apply activities that are dedicated to learners' various modes of learning.

While T1 aptly admits the clear impact of her own preference for Visual LS on the presentation of teaching materials, the activities that she provided encompassed a combination of various formats of materials targeting several LSs:

Mostly I try to use different ones. I think my own style also influences it. Because I'm a visual one, so I tend to work with some visual aids like graphics, or some pictures. So, I find that useful. So first, I prepare something like that. And then I try to find some other sources, for instance, audio or video. Also, on the topic that might be interesting for my students, maybe some current trends.

Likewise, T3, apart from the ample provision of activities aiming for visual and auditory perception, provides accommodation for kinesthetic learning style as well:

Maybe with audio and with visuals - it's okay. With kinesthetic...uhm. I usually let students stand up for example, if they are doing something or to move around the room or you know move when they have options. So, for example, to move right or to move left or to go to the corner of the room so that they also have a choice.

Moreover, T1 stresses the value of being versatile and practicing all learning styles to be prepared for diverse learning environments:

So, there might be their own learning style that they stick to, they find, like, more beneficial. But still, I think that it's important to be engaged in all learning styles because somehow you would face some, I mean, even visual learners, they might face

speaking tasks, even in IELTS and so on. So, they might be prepared for different situations.

One point worth pointing out is that albeit her often spontaneous response to learning styles, the activities (book reading) that the T2 assigns her students specifically require them to be exposed to various learning styles (visual and reading) one at a time:

In September, with my eighth graders, we started reading the book. If I remember, based on this book, there is also a movie. We compared the book of this story and then the movie. So that was so interesting because, at the same time, they were reading the book.

In addition, the teacher implicitly recognizes the strength of each LS, which the teacher focuses on for specific purposes:

When they see the movie, they can understand the feelings of the actors. But in the book with the words of the author, it is also clearly explained how each character feels and etc. If they just watch the movie, it may not enrich their vocabulary, but when they read the book, it really enriches and they can, while taking their summative, for example, the writing part, now explain the mood of that character or the tone of the author. And they can use the words from the book, for example.

Thus, the teacher is aware of the benefit that each mode of learning will lead to maximized learning. In a similar vein, T3 believes that differentiation of learning outcomes should be fulfilled with the supply of autonomy to learners with respect to their choice of resources:

And I also give them a choice to choose the outcome. For example, somebody can make it in the form of a written report, or somebody will make this report in visual form diagrams, for example, for those learners who are more visually oriented, visual learners. Somebody will choose, for example, a role plays where they can move and manipulate objects and so on with a variety of resources. They somebody can use, like audio resources, someone will maybe use encyclopedias. So they can use a variety of resources.

It can also be seen that the teachers' differentiated pedagogical approach takes into account students' individual differences and learning styles. For example, as part of her differentiation technique, T3 tended to practice grouping students according to learning styles:

Usually, I do it through grouping. I can put them in small groups like this or bigger groups. And for each of these groups, I will assign different tasks, usually. And I also give them a choice to choose the outcome. For example, somebody can make it in the form of a written report, somebody will make this report in visual form diagrams, for example, for those learners who are more visually oriented, visual learners. Somebody will choose, for example, a role play where they can move and manipulate objects and so on.

Considering that these teachers' beliefs about learning are underpinned by Social Constructivism, social interaction is the key characteristic of such a learning environment. Therefore, a major portion of data emanating from the analysis across the instruments pertains to the consideration of learning styles in teachers' reasoning for grouping students for collaborative work. Although all three teachers made a remark on peer assessment, a type of formative assessment, which involves pairing or grouping students with one another, they did not provide a rationale as to how and based on which characteristics they get students assigned to those groups. T1 mentioned:

For example, I usually use peer assessment. Based on the beforehand set criteria, students assess each other/in groups.

e.g.,

Teacher: "Did ... use past simple correctly?"

Ss: "Yes/No."

T: "Can you give examples when ... used past simple?"

In a similar vein, T2 mentioned prefers pair work to group work because she finds it more effective:

Because in pair work, when they listen to each other they are focused on each other. If it is group work, let's say there are five students or four students in the group, when the student listens to one person it takes them 20 minutes to listen to all these three students and it takes a long time.

Besides, the teachers shared that they group students according to their abilities and language levels. For example, T1 tends to put more able and less able students together.

When asked the reason behind such an approach, the teachers answered that:

The students always ask, like: "I don't understand, what are you talking about? And then when I asked the students to help me, and it's just I choose one of those students who were very attentive all the time. Who is an active listener every time. I choose that student and make them work together.

The teacher further extended the idea that group work always hinges upon equal amounts of individual responsibility and accountability:

The groups can be different every time, divided randomly. And then when that student B is in their company, I mean, in their team, that group is unhappy saying can you please replace him, etc. And that student is also confused. And he understands why it happens because he's not responsible.

In her recommendation to an imaginary classroom scenario, which described a student who is not willing to interact with peers, T2 advised that it 'would be much more comfortable for students to work in groups if they are divided not randomly, but by a specific logical way.' However, when asked about her grouping strategy, the teacher replied that she resorts to spontaneously getting students into groups. That said, the following extract displays that impromptu grouping of students may bring about a learning ramification:

Student B is also in charge of doing something, but he doesn't do his work appropriately. He forgets to do something or he's every time out of deadlines. And then the other members of the team are not happy.

However, in classroom scenario 3, the teacher referred to a purposive grouping strategy to address such learning conflicts: “I usually choose 3 students out of class (with leadership skills) and ask them to create their own groups of 3-4 people one by one, calling peers’ names. As a result, students are satisfied with groupmates”.

Moreover, T2 associates group work with a “requirement to reach approach to learning (ATL) skills”. Hence, she claims that learners must be ultimately engaged in work with peers, albeit their reluctance to do so. Put differently, when confronted with a situation where a learner is not content with working with peers, the teacher tended to stress the necessity of grouping:

I say that they are in the real world, in the future, they have to work with other people. That's one of the requirements anyway. So they will face these kinds of challenges in future life, and then they won't be working alone. I tell them they are practicing ATL skills. It usually includes everything around you.

When put in a similar situation, in which a student expressed a preference for working on their own, T1 was found to be lenient in providing the requested opportunity:

I usually give them a choice like if you are willing to work individually, so you're up to do that. So, there is no such kind of limitation to do that. I did have such cases when students did not feel like working in a group. It was okay for them to work alone. And I allow them. But like, I provided like, scaffolding for everyone. So, it was not a problem.

Even though T2 commented on this point that there is no purposeful approach to forming a peer group. In particular, teachers’ interview and scenario responses did not elucidate a specific pattern of pair-forming or grouping techniques.

#### **4.4. EFL Teachers’ Challenges in the Application of Learning Styles**

It is evident throughout the previous sections that the teachers’ instructional strategies and beliefs visibly contributed to the consideration of individual learning differences and learning styles through the application of learner-centered teaching methods such as

differentiating and scaffolding learning and promoting active student inquiry. However, the inductive data analysis across the cases based on teachers' responses in the scenarios and interviews established an unexpected theme. It was unveiled that there are a number of underlying challenges that hinder the implementation of learning-style based approaches in EFL teaching. Therefore, the challenges that impact the inclusion of LS in EFL teachers' pedagogy relate to conceptual, and institutional-level constraints.

### *Conceptual Constraints*

A challenge that teachers commonly refer to throughout their responses is conceptual constraints. Teachers mentioned being often confronted with students having learning difficulties and unique preferences for activities in their classes. However, the teachers responded to those learning demands implicitly due to not being fully aware that those variances are often caused by students' different learning style preferences. As much as all three teachers tended to call upon various TS and resources that contributed to the accommodation of several LSs, they did not explicitly plan their lessons with LS in mind. For this reason, T2 did not know how to react when stumbling upon students' divergent learning style preferences. It can be exemplified in the following extract: "I have one case when students say, when I'm talking, talking and one student is looking at me, can you please show it on the screen? Because I'm a visual type of student. That student surprised me a lot" (T2).

As far as T1 and T3 are concerned, the teachers expressed their familiarity with LS as a concept. However, although T1 was cognizant of the construct of LS preferences owing to her previous academic background, her conception of it was rather limited:

I know I learned during master's. I was aware of this before, like different styles of preferences, but I didn't link them to learning in education. It was like a general term, for instance, learning numbers and learning new information.

Similarly, T3, despite having a good understanding of learning styles, perceived them as “special” lessons, which can be used on certain occasions, and believed that “it is not possible to include all learning styles all the time”.

Apart from the issues that arise from insufficient conceptual awareness of the learning styles phenomenon, the data revealed that there are a number of impediments in the application of LS that could be attributed to institutional-level challenges. This will be highlighted in the subsequent section.

### ***Institutional Constraints***

Teachers made mention of numerous obstacles to implementing learning style-based approaches. Firstly, all three teachers indicated that they act in strong accordance with the objectives set by the school curriculum and that a focus on learners’ individual differences can negatively impact assessment. T1 highlighted:

We divide the students according to their academic levels. However, there are these kinds of levels, it doesn’t mean that there is differentiation in the assessment because at the end of the study, they’re all assessed in the same way. I mean, they have the same assessment tasks.

T1 continues this point:

If it’s formative, then yes, I try differentiation by task. For instance, yes, providing them with maybe some clues and so on. But if it comes to summative assessment, unfortunately, I can’t do anything because it’s like a standard way. And also, for summative assessment, we usually code students’ work, so I’m not aware of whose work I’m assessing. I might assess not my students, but the other teachers’ students as well.

Another reason as to why teachers do not practice learning styles might be attributed to time constraints. In this regard, the teacher expressed that designing a lesson to meet the needs of all requires a decent amount of time, and as they suggested they don’t have sufficient time to prepare such a lesson. Due to this, the teachers find it difficult to cover all

learners' preferences in each lesson, given the fixed expectations of the curriculum. Yet, T1 believes that it can be done occasionally:

The time is limited to 40 minutes, so you have to stick to the like curriculum and the objectives that you're supposed to follow. So, it is really difficult to choose one type of method or different activities that I could use, and that could meet all my students' needs and preferences. So, I do find it challenging. Of course, it's impossible to stick to learning needs or learning style of each student in each lesson, but I mean, it could be done occasionally.

Therefore, T3 posited that this could be achieved through joint collaborative planning, where each teacher brings in activities for a certain LS:

Every teacher has a mixed classroom. So, when different teachers can find resources, one teacher for audio learners, one teacher for visual learners to make sure that this lesson is built. That's why it depends on collaborative planning. If it's successful, then teachers will have a very good plan to use. It's not always possible to include all learning styles. This is the biggest thing.

To sum up, it was found that social constructivism and the functionalist (communicative) explanations of language learning and teaching inform teachers' EFL pedagogy. For example, the data revealed that teachers believe that they are facilitators of learning who guide and support learners in constructing their own knowledge. Learners are viewed as active agents in their own learning who learn through social interaction and collaboration with their peers. The classroom environment is seen as a collaborative and supportive learning community where learners can engage in discussion, work together in groups, and reflect on their learning. The teacher creates a safe and supportive learning environment where learners are encouraged to take risks, make mistakes, and learn from each other.

#### **4.5. Summary of the Findings**

The study revealed several significant findings, which can be summarized as follows:

1. There is a strong link between the teachers' own LSs and the instructional methods they apply in their EFL pedagogy. The dominant language teaching methods are revealed to be "differentiation", "scaffolding", "multimodal" and "inquiry-based" approaches, stemming from the Social Constructivist learning paradigm, which foregrounds learner-centeredness.
2. It was found that Social Constructivist and functionalist beliefs underpin teachers' EFL teaching practices.
3. The teachers' perceptions of individual differences impacted their pedagogical practices. That is, not only did they recognize the fact that learners differ in their modes of acquiring knowledge, but they also articulated the significance of complementing learning styles with an appropriate learning activity.
4. It was revealed that this study's teachers' accommodation of LS often does not entail a planned or purposeful design of instruction relevant to cover all possible LSs. The teachers attended to students varying LSs unconsciously and spontaneously, often as a response to students with learning difficulties.
5. Several institutional and conceptual challenges inhibiting the application of all LSs, resurfaced in the course of the study. These impediments were the fixed school curriculum, time constraints and the lack of theoretical awareness of the construct of LSs. Altogether these challenges brought about the teachers' misconception that a learning style-based lesson is not always feasible.

#### **4.6. Chapter Summary**

This chapter presented the findings obtained from multiple research instruments, which were questionnaires, practice-based scenarios, and semi-structured interviews. Particularly, the instruments yielded data about the teachers' beliefs and values regarding the

role of Learning Styles. The next chapter will be devoted to a detailed discussion of the study's findings in relation to the Literature Review Chapter.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the EFL teachers' perspectives on the role of Learning Styles in the development of learners' English language competencies. The previous chapter provided the findings from questionnaires, practice-based scenarios and interviews that revealed EFL teachers' beliefs and values about using Learning Styles (LS) at two NIS schools in Kazakhstan. The present chapter focuses on the discussion of the findings. The discussion of the results is guided by the main research question and two sub questions. The main research question is:

What are EFL teachers' values and beliefs about drawing on students' LSs in developing students' English language competencies?

### **Sub Questions:**

1. How do EFL teachers' LSs relate to their TSs?
2. What language learning and teaching beliefs underpin EFL teachers' TSs in developing students' English language competencies?

To address the main research question, I will first discuss the findings for the two sub-questions.

### **5.1. How Do EFL Teachers' LSs Relate to their TSs?**

The study found several connections between the teachers' own LSs and their instructional methods in their EFL pedagogy. I will discuss these connections within and across the data sets. First, the results from the questionnaire revealed the participants' dominant learning styles as Reflectors and Activists. This means that they value learning by doing, investigating, analyzing, and solving real-world problems indicative of active and learner-centered principles (Honey & Mumford, 1986; Lee; 2014; Schiro, 2013).

Interestingly, the results across the data sets indicated that the teachers' dominant Activist and Reflector LS values were also reflected in their language teaching methods. For example,

they valued “differentiation,” “scaffolding”, “multimodality” and “inquiry-based” approaches in their EFL classes that heavily draw on learner-centeredness, and experiential learning (Duffy & Raymer, 2010; Harmer, 2015). Consequently, the study found that the NIS teachers’ own LSs resulted in a match with their EFL TSs that contributes to their students’ motivation, their emotional well-being, confidence, and English language development (Akobirova & Sayfiyeva, 2022; Jordan et al., 2010, as cited in Gudnason, 2017; Peacock, 2001; Tuan, 2011).

Secondly, the study found that the relationship between educators’ LSs and their TSs was underpinned by Social Constructivist beliefs about language learning. For example, the results indicated that these EFL teachers who are Activists preferred language learning methods that involve active participation and engagement of their students, such as group work, role-playing, and interactive exercises reflective of Social Constructivist principles. In addition, the study also revealed that their dominant Reflector LS resulted in language learning methods that encourage students to reflect on their learning, such as discussion groups, and individual study. Therefore, the results illustrated that the teachers’ LS relates to the language learning conditions they create in their EFL classroom environments because they placed a great emphasis on learners as the active constructors of their learning (Ghaedi et al., 2020; Khalid et al., 2017; Nessipbayeva & Egger, 2015). Consequently, the findings indicated that the teachers in this study who demonstrated both Activist and Reflector LSs value hands-on learning visible in their social constructivist pedagogical strategies (Nessipbayeva & Egger, 2015). As a result, the study found that the teachers’ LSs influenced their TSs, indicative of their educational beliefs and philosophy (Bagheri & East, 2021; Ellis, 2006; Reeves, 2009).

Thirdly, the findings indicated that a functionalist perspective to language teaching connected both teacher LSs and TSs. Therefore, the results revealed their functionalist

language teaching perspective consists of a learner-centric orientation. Drawing on multiple modalities, such as audio-visual and linguistic modes the teachers actively engage students in their language learning development (Akobirova & Sayfiyeva, 2022; Hull; 2005; Mills, 2010). This means their LSs valued principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) that place a strong emphasis on meaningful communication and authentic language use (Butler, 2011). In addition, the findings across the multiple data sets revealed the functionalist relationship between their LS and TS, which is visible in the teachers' consistent use of activities geared towards active and experience-driven language learning in which they expect learners to develop language skills to be able to communicate and make sense of the world. NIS is a distinctive school context in Kazakhstan that has embraced Western methods like learner-centered instruction. Therefore, it logically follows that NIS teachers' comprehension of language learning theories and practices plays a pivotal role in fostering an environment conducive to English language learning. This concurs with the idea that teachers' English language teaching awareness serves as a significant predictor in promoting and implementing functional language teaching approaches (Fine, 2003; Gibbons, 2015).

Finally, it is worth noting that these EFL teachers' dominant LSs have led them to use a combination of TSs depending on the learning objectives, the needs of their students, and the specific content being taught. Therefore, the study found that the teachers adapt their TS to accommodate the different LSs of their students through differentiated teaching, 21st century literacies and learner-centered methodologies (Bender, 2012; Ciampa, K., & Gallagher, 2021). For this reason, the study is not congruent with the research findings of Alnujaidi (2019) and Flowerdew, Miller, and Li (2000), who found Hong Kong and Arab teachers' TS preference for behaviorist teaching, valuing more frontal (teacher-led) and abstract strategies rather than differentiated teaching and learner-centered tasks (Alnujaidi, 2019; Ismaiel, 2017). Numerous studies have suggested that the observed disparity can be

traced back to cultural and contextual differences (Peacock, 2001; Rao, 2012; Xiao, 2006; Zhang, 2007). In light of this, it is important to acknowledge the findings reflect the unique contextual factors that create the conditions for NIS educators to shift from teacher to learner-centered approaches to implement Kazakhstani educational reforms. Nonetheless, the study's results suggested that NIS, which is considered a flagship in implementing innovative educational practices in Kazakhstan, can offer relevant support and mentoring to state mainstream schools in terms of best pedagogical experiences focusing on learners' educational needs (Bekenova & Nygatayeva, 2017).

## **5.2. What Language Learning and Teaching Beliefs Underpin EFL Teachers' TSs in Developing Students' English Language Competencies?**

Interestingly, social constructivist and functionalist views of language teaching underpinned the EFL teachers' beliefs, visible in how they emphasized the practical use and purpose of language in real-life situations. A common finding across the datasets indicated that the teachers' primary goal of language instruction is to equip their learners with necessary linguistic skills and communicative abilities to function effectively in various contexts.

First, the results illuminated the teachers' view of their role as facilitators guiding learners to be co-constructors of knowledge. For example, they emphasized the cooperative nature of learning, regarded learners as active participants in learning, and believed in teaching life skills needed for society's betterment (Schiro, 2013). Their social constructivist values were also observable in how they strived to include active inquiry-based tasks and learner- and peer-directed language learning through real-life experiences (Duffy & Raymer, 2010; Gibbons, 2012; Ghaedi et al., 2020; Schreurs & Dumbraveanu, 2014). Therefore, the results highlighted that the teachers supported a co-directed learning environment described as a "joint action plan" where students learn from each other to maximize learning outcomes

(Harb & Taha Thomure, 2020; Schiro, 2013). The current study's findings align with Ng's (2003) research as both studies found that teachers' social constructivist language learning values and beliefs resulted in them being flexible to their learners' needs, supporting a co-directed meaning-focused learning environment that emphasized student engagement as critical in language learning. The results also concur with research foregrounding teachers' social constructivist values and beliefs as being rooted in active learner inquiry, learner- and peer-directed collaborative learning where students learn from each other "by doing" (Butler, 2011; Powell & Kalina; 2009). Consequently, the study found a relationship between their language learning beliefs and the teaching strategies that they used in their EFL classrooms (Kuo & Anderson, 2010; Mohsen & Noordin, 2018; Nunan, 2004; Willis & Willis, 2007).

Secondly, the findings highlighted the NIS teachers' functional orientation because they shifted from a one-size-fits-all language teaching belief towards embracing a "post-methods" era (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, 2006). For example, the teachers' instructional strategies consisted of active inquiry-based and differentiated language learning that reflected the local context and how teachers catered to the needs of their learners. Moreover, the teachers' functionalist language teaching beliefs were also evident in their preference for differentiated instruction, in which they created group activities based on the ability of individual students. On this issue, the results revealed that teachers often randomly got learners to work in groups of mixed-ability students, which is not consistent with most recommendations that teachers should strategically put learners in groups according to their LSs (Kyprianidou et al., 2012; Pasina et al., 2019). Nonetheless, the study found that the teachers' functionalist orientation allowed them to construct pedagogy that meets individual learners' needs, such as their unique LSs, corroborating the notion of "principled pragmatism" (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, p. 33; Richards, 2008).

Finally, the results indicated that several external and internal factors influenced the teachers' instructional strategies (Duffy & Anderson, 1986). For example, the study found that external factors such as the unique peculiarities of the assessment system (summative assessment) and time constraints brought about the teachers' doubts about including LSs in lesson planning. In addition, an internal factor that impacted their language learning and teaching beliefs was the insufficient conceptual familiarity with the construct of LSs. Due to this, their classroom and instructional strategies did not incorporate purposefully planned learning style-based activities. This finding was also previously reported in an empirical study carried out in a Turkish educational context, where teachers' teaching strategies did not harmonize with or explicitly refer to their students' divergent LSs in designing learning material and classroom activities (Phipps & Borg, 2009).

### **5.3. What are EFL Teachers' Values and Beliefs about Drawing on their Students' LSs in Developing English Language Competencies?**

The study revealed that teachers' beliefs about language learning and teaching and their learning preferences impact their instruction and how they include their students' LS differences. First, the study found a clear link between the teachers' Activist and Reflector LSs, and their teaching strategies which included a preference for multimodal and inquiry-based teaching. These active learning methods empower learners' cognitive potential and communicative development that they attain through inquisition and exploration (Duffy & Raymer, 2010; Lee, 2014). This posits that teachers place more attention on cultivating students' communicative competence needed for social interactions than solely focusing on "linguistic forms". Thus, they do not encourage teaching grammar or vocabulary in an isolated manner. On the contrary, the teachers find it worthwhile to design learning materials incorporating all four skills, such as listening, reading, speaking and writing in conjunction as they happen so in real-life situations (Doughty & Long, 2003, as cited in Butler, 2011). It is

apparent that the teachers support the application of multimodal strategies such as using images, video-clips with subtitles, assigning them to read book chapters, then reflecting on their understanding through the medium of writing. This allows the learners to benefit from both receptive and productive skills, developing their multiliteracies, which concurs with research who found that such language teaching strategies encourage students to think creatively and critically as they learn from their mistakes (Lee, 2014). Supporting this principle, the teachers referred to multiple modalities as part of their inductive teaching techniques to complement different LSs as well as provide language input, and scaffold learners' conceptual understanding of language features. Thus, the teachers prioritized fostering students' communicative competence and writing skills to over focusing on forms and grammatical patterns (Klapper, 2003, as cited in Butler, 2011).

Second, when drawing on the analytical framework, the results indicated that Social Constructivism underpins the teachers' language learning beliefs. This theory pinpoints social interaction and collaboration as integral parts of language learning, wherein an individual acquires a language by interacting with those around them within the surrounding environments (Ellis & Shintani, 2014; Hall, 2016; Kuo & Anderson, 2010; Mohsen & Noordin, 2018). The results of this study revealed that the teachers encouraged interaction to develop students' English language competencies because they allowed students to engage in various modes of learning such as making connections between visual and written forms to enhance their comprehension of language functions. The teachers' differentiation strategies contained scaffolding techniques to involve students in co-directed learning to support and mitigate language learning difficulties, capitalizing on their individual strength. In addition, the study results revealed that the teachers tried to accommodate individual differences to strengthen classroom interaction by creating a conducive environment encouraging learners to engage in meaning-making activities and real-world communicative situations (Gibbons,

2015). In this way, teachers differentiate content on various occasions simultaneously accommodating auditory and visual learners, frequently providing autonomy for students to choose their preferred form of activity. Existing research on CLT has reported that apart from teacher-student interactions, learners benefit a great deal from peers' error correction feedback. Such a strategy is found effective in enhancing learners' vocabulary and grammar accuracy especially in producing written work (Li, 2010; Long, 2015). Moreover, organizing group interaction by assigning each student a role to complete a task, and assessing their peers' work serve as the evident link between the teachers' social constructivist language learning beliefs and their EFL pedagogy. Consequently, this study showed similarities with research findings indicating that such teaching strategies can contribute to English language development, and classroom talk where students stretch their language skills, which they need for independently producing comprehensible output (Butler, 2011; Swain, 2000, as cited in Gibbons, 2015).

Thirdly, based on the conceptual framework, the results revealed that teachers hold functionalist values about language teaching. For example, this study highlighted that these teachers avoid teaching fixed patterns (Butler, 2011). To put it another way, their teaching strategies prioritized the development of language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, achieved through being engaged in real-life meaningful and authentic learning rather than teaching what is "correct" (Kuo, 2010; Mohsen & Noordin, 2018; Nunan, 2004; Willis & Willis, 2007). To achieve this, the teachers often referred to indirect methods to present a language structure, providing students with relevant examples so that they arrive at their own understanding and conclusions. In light of this, the findings indicated that the teachers follow the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT) (Butler, 2011). This is evident in that these NIS teachers develop their learners' English language skills through exposure to authentic communication, trial and

error, and learning from their own experiences (Doughty & Long, 2003; Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

In creating such relevant conditions for EFL learning, the study supports that lesson materials should target incorporating diverse LSs, which is recommended by a number of research studies (Peacock, 2001; Rao, 2010; Xiao, 2006). Interestingly, there is a great deal of research suggesting that intentional mismatches between students' LS and teachers' instructional strategies could expose students to unfamiliar LSs which could expand their existing LS repertoire (Gardner, 2013; Gudnason, 2017; Peacock, 2001). In other words, a balanced TS is that it exposes students to alternative LSs that allow them to experience new media of learning (Akobirova & Sayfiyeva, 2022; McCarthy, 1987, as cited in Morgan, 1995). Congruent with this, the participants of this study also highlighted the importance of teaching various styles of obtaining and recreating information. Therefore, following these recommendations, teachers can enhance all learners' problem-solving, creative, and critical thinking skills, necessary for developing English language competencies.

Finally, the study found several conceptual and institutional constraints that influence teachers' views concerning the applicability of LS in their everyday teaching. Previous research has shown that teachers may have a limited familiarity with the construct of LSs which heightens their doubts about incorporating all LSs in learning material (Agustrianita & Purnawarman, 2019). Similarly, current research indicated that teachers perceived LSs as a new concept. Another constraint related to institutional factors is that teachers' use of their students' LS was hampered due to rigid curriculum requirements, unique assessment demands, and time limitations. These findings are in line with a research study where Turkish teachers expressed that the rigid compliance with curriculum demands presented challenges to meeting all learners' LSs (Karabuga, 2015). However, a notable research study in the context of Vietnamese education (Tuan, 2011) showcased the positive outcomes achieved

through teacher collaboration, promoting the implementation of LSs. Additionally, Wilson (2011) emphasized the importance of providing teachers with appropriate training programs to incorporate learning styles into course curricula, which can enhance inclusivity through their practical application of LSs.

To sum up, the results indicated that even though the teachers' classroom teaching strategies demonstrated that they value learner-centric approaches, it was found that the notion of LS is conceptualized implicitly. Incidentally, teachers were mindful of the view posited by Kazu (2009, p.85) that "LSs are neither better nor worse than each other", which supports the findings of an action research study illustrating that Uzbekistani student's LS benefited from learning material that complements multiple learning modalities (Akobirova & Sayfiyeva, 2022). In addition, the teachers' familiarity with individual differences extended to broad categories such as "way of thinking," "style of thinking" and "learning styles" (Gardner, 2000). In this regard, this study found that the teachers tended to follow the principle of different learners - a different approach (Bekenova & Nygatayeva, 2017). Nonetheless, the study found that their social constructivist and functionalist language teaching values and beliefs largely foregrounded the consideration of students' individual differences, encapsulating various LSs in their pedagogical strategies. For this reason, the study found that the three participating teachers' functionalist perspective of language teachings has allowed them to strategically use multiple language teaching methods to be inclusive of all LSs in developing their learners' English language competence, valuing experiential learning over regurgitating correct structural forms (Doughty & Long, 2003; Halliday, 1973; Lee, 2014). Consequently, the results revealed that these NIS teachers are developing their students' multiliteracies and English language competencies by drawing on learner-centered strategies, and that they are mindful of students' diverse ways of learning, which aligns with current educational reforms in Kazakhstan.

#### **5.4. Chapter Summary**

This chapter presented the discussion of findings that emerged from this study in relation to the existing literature. It also focused on elaborating on the research questions which guided this research. The next chapter will conclude the study and highlight the implications derived from the findings for theory and practice.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

The study explored Kazakhstani EFL teachers' beliefs and values about the role of Learning Styles (LSs) in their instructional strategies in the EFL classroom. To attain this goal, the questionnaires, exploratory in nature, the practice-based scenarios, and the interviews were employed. The research questions that addressed the above-stated purpose of the study were as follows:

**RQ:** What are EFL teachers' values and beliefs about drawing on students' LSs in developing English language competencies?

### Sub Questions:

1. How do EFL teachers' LSs relate to their TSs?
2. What language learning and teaching beliefs underpin EFL teachers' TSs in developing students' English language competencies?

The present chapter summarizes the main conclusions that emanated from the findings, offers implications and recommendations for practice and further research, and describes limitations of the study.

### 6.1. Summary of the Main Research Results

The study revealed several significant findings, which can be summarized as follows:

#### *Relationship Between Teachers LS and TS*

The result indicated that the teachers' own LSs were valued in their EFL instructional methods. This relationship was facilitated by their social constructivist beliefs about language learning and functionalist values about language teaching. Therefore, the results revealed their dominant language learning and teaching methods consisted of differentiated teaching, scaffolding, multimodality and inquiry-based tasks and resources, which foreground learner-centeredness.

### ***Teachers' Social Constructivist Beliefs and their Contribution to their EFL Pedagogy and Development of Learners' English Language Skills***

It was found that social constructivist language learning and functionalist teaching beliefs underpin teachers' EFL teaching practices. For example, the teachers believed that their instructional strategies should match their learners' diverse needs and individual differences. Such a social constructivist and functionalist perspective on EFL teaching resulted in teachers often drawing on the advantages of all LSs by encouraging students to experiment with different varieties of learning materials and resources with the purpose of developing learners' multiliteracies and achieving learning outcomes.

### ***Conceptual and Institutional Challenges in the Application of LS***

Several institutional and conceptual challenges inhibited the application of all LSs, which were the school curriculum, time constraints and the lack of theoretical awareness of the construct of LSs.

## **6.2. Limitations**

The major limitation of this study is associated with the small sample size consisting of three teachers, which makes it difficult to generalize the findings to larger populations and other contexts. Moreover, the findings might be restricted since the participants were selected only from two schools located in two regions. Thus, their responses may not represent all NIS teachers' views albeit that they work within the same school system. Furthermore, the study was purposefully interested in getting insight from the teachers of intellectual schools for gifted students, known as the innovative platform for contemporary educational practices, highly supporting educators' professional development. Therefore, the study's results cannot represent other mainstream state schools.

Moreover, the current research was more concerned with the teachers' beliefs about LSs construct; thus, the findings may be confined to the teachers' verbal responses as it did

not use observation as a research tool, which could have offered more raw and reliable data shedding light on the EFL teachers' actual classroom practices and serve supplementary to the interview data. Nevertheless, to the best of my knowledge, this research is among the few qualitative studies that investigated the construct of LSs in teaching in the local Kazakhstani context.

### **6.3. Implications of the Study**

The study highlighted the importance of addressing teachers' educational philosophies and implications for pre-service and in-service teacher education to refine their conceptual and practical knowledge. Therefore, the study's findings may be relevant and/or potentially useful for theoretical and practical enhancement of EFL teaching pedagogy. First, the study points to the importance of equipping teachers with more theoretical knowledge about various internal and external, psychological and social factors that are at play in a learner's foreign language acquisition, including individual differences and learning styles. Secondly, it holds practical implications for NIS schools because the study pointed out the contextual peculiarities and teachers' values. More specifically, given that NIS is the beacon of innovation in education, taking on Western approaches to curriculum and teaching their practices needs interrogation if they are to model and guide new EFL methods to other school contexts. Therefore, scrutinizing NIS teachers' beliefs, perceptions and educational philosophies can be useful for policymakers and curriculum planners to better understand how NIS undertakes modern approaches. Therefore, this study holds practical implications for the Center of Excellence providing EFL teacher training and PDs to offer NIS teachers more information about LSs as part of differentiated instruction and encourage them to engage in action research.

#### 6.4. Recommendations

Given that the NIS teachers embraced social constructivist and functionalist values and beliefs about using LS for their students' English language development, the study has developed recommendations relevant to various stakeholders such as researchers, school administrators, practitioners, and teachers.

1. Researchers should investigate the pedagogical significance or the applicability of LSs in EFL teaching and learning. As the findings demonstrated some teachers had insufficient knowledge about the concept of LSs, while others expressed their hesitation to prepare a separate activity dedicated to each LS because of time constraints and limited space to manipulate the curriculum given the fixed system of summative assessment.
2. Additionally, since the study focused on intellectual school teachers' beliefs and values, it would be reasonable to examine state mainstream school teachers' awareness, conceptualization and practices of LSs in their pedagogy.
3. School administrators should consider disseminating necessary information to teachers and equipping them with the theoretical and practical knowledge applicable to contextual peculiarities. Therefore, it is highly recommended that school administrators provide PD programs since the lack of familiarity with the construct of LSs was the hindrance pronounced in this study.
4. Finally, practitioners and teachers should update their knowledge of students' varying LSs. With the direction provided, teachers might wish to engage in action research to further corroborate the applicability of this approach in their pedagogy.
5. On the basis of this, PD involvement could address the issue of providing teachers with sufficient knowledge so that they can enhance their EFL methodology by applying LS strategies to develop their students' English language competencies.

Alternatively, it could be suggested to involve teachers in teacher collaboration to develop lessons, demonstrating activities illustrating specific LS. In sum, these strategies would make teachers gain more understanding and update their professional knowledge.

### **6.5. Conclusions of the Study**

The study found that EFL teachers' dominant teaching styles were aligned with their own learning styles. It is noteworthy that it was their social constructivist and functional language teaching values and beliefs that guided their teaching strategies which included differentiation, scaffolding, inquiry-based and multimodal teaching. It was these beliefs and values that underpinned their understanding of diverse learners' needs and how to leverage their LS through various language learning tasks, resources and classroom environments that developed cognitive thinking skills and communicative competence. Consequently, this study pointed out the modern teaching approaches at NIS, which could form the basis for transferring their English language teaching best practices to state and other schools in Kazakhstan.

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## Appendix A

### INFORMED CONSENT FORM

#### Exploring the Role of Learning Styles in NIS Teachers' EFL Pedagogy: A Qualitative Inquiry

**DESCRIPTION:** You are invited to participate in a research study that investigates Kazakhstani EFL teachers' beliefs and values of the role of learning styles in promoting students' language proficiency, undertaken by Assel Nurdauletova, a second-year graduate student in M.A in "Multilingual Education". The study also aims to explore teachers' practices of applying strategies that accommodate Kazakhstani learners' learning styles in ELT. Depending on your preference and convenience, you will be asked to participate in an individual face-to-face or online interview, the interview will be informal and will be conducted in English, Russian or Kazakh languages depending on your preference.

During the interview, you will be asked to answer a few questions about your classroom practices, understanding and perceptions of the concept of learning styles and the strategies you use in your English language teaching. With your permission, the responses will be tape-recorded, as they will be used in further analysis. In case you do not wish to be recorded, I can take notes while you answer the questions. In addition, you will be requested to complete an online questionnaire including your personal details, teaching experience, and questions about your own learning style(s) and teaching methods. Finally, you will be asked to provide written responses to some classroom case questions. Your name and the name of your workplace will be anonymous during all steps of the study, including documents, electronic files, and the dissertation itself. All the data, recordings, and consent forms, will be saved on a personal USB flash drive of the researcher and kept in a secured box that will be password protected. Your participation in this study is voluntary. Although questions are not intended to be sensitive, if at any point you do not wish to answer a question, you may decline to respond. If you wish to withdraw from the project, you may do so at any time, and all the information (tapes, notes) will be deleted.

**TIME INVOLVEMENT:** Your participation will take approximately 90 minutes.

**RISKS AND BENEFITS:** The risks associated with this study are minimal. To protect you from the possible risks, we intend to take every necessary step to ensure your confidentiality. Your and your institution's identities will be hidden; thus, your names will be replaced with pseudonyms in the documents, and data will be stored in a secure place. No information from interviews will be shared with your administration. The interview time and location will be negotiated with you personally and will not interfere with your work schedules. Any identifying information and all password-protected files will be removed from the computer after completing the study so that your identity is not revealed. At the end of the research project, the voice file will be deleted.

The benefits that may reasonably be expected from this study are getting to share your views of learning styles and experiences of developing communicative skills of school students in

Kazakhstan. In addition, your responses will contribute to getting new insights into the implementation of communicative language teaching in the Kazakhstani EFL context and whether instructional strategies consider learners' learning styles. Your decision to participate in this study will not affect your work or professional status. Any report of this research that is made available to the public will not include your name or any other individual information by which you could be identified.

**PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS:** If you have read this form and have decided to participate in this project, please understand your participation is voluntary. Therefore, you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without any penalty. The alternative is not to participate and the right to refuse to answer particular questions. The results of this research study will be included in the thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Multilingual Education at Nazarbayev University. They may also be presented at scientific or professional meetings or published in scientific journals.

**CONTACT INFORMATION:**

Researcher: Assel Nurdauletova, 2nd year Master's student in M.A. in Multilingual Education.

Graduate School of Education, Nazarbayev University, Astana, Kazakhstan.

Email: [assel.nurdauletova@nu.edu.kz](mailto:assel.nurdauletova@nu.edu.kz)

Tel: +7-702-699-42-79

**Questions:** If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this research, its procedures, risks and benefits, please contact the Research Supervisor for this student work, Assistant Professor Michelle Bedeker, at [michelle.bedeker@nu.edu.kz](mailto:michelle.bedeker@nu.edu.kz)

**Independent Contact:** If you are not satisfied with how this study is being conducted, or if you have any concerns, complaints, or general questions about the research or your rights as a participant, please contact the NUGSE Research Committee to speak to someone independent of the research team at +7 7172 709359. You can also write an email to the NUGSE Research Committee at [gse\\_researchcommittee@nu.edu.kz](mailto:gse_researchcommittee@nu.edu.kz)

Please sign this consent form if you agree to participate in this study. Please sign this consent form if you agree to participate in this study.

- I have carefully read the information provided;
- I confirm that I am 18 or I am elder that 18;
- I have been given full information regarding the purpose and procedures of the study;
- I understand how the data collected will be used, and that any confidential information will be seen only by the researchers and will not be revealed to anyone else;
- I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason;

- With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.
- I give my permission to audio record the interview: Yes  No

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## АҚПАРАТТЫҚ КЕЛІСІМ НЫСАНЫ

**НЗМ мұғалімдерінің ағылшын тілін оқытудағы оқу стильдерінің рөлін зерттеу:**

### сапалық зерттеу

**СИПАТТАМА:** Сізді қазақстандық ағылшын тілі мұғалімдерінің студенттердің коммуникативтік құзыреттілігін дамытудағы оқу стильдерінің рөлі туралы сенімдері мен көзқарастарын зерттейтін зерттеу жұмысына қатысуға шақырамыз. Зерттеуді «Көптілді білім беру» мамандығы бойынша магистратураның екінші курс студенті Әсел Нұрдаулетова жүргізеді. Зерттеу жұмысы, сондай-ақ ағылшын тілін оқытуда қазақстандық оқушылардың оқу стильдеріне сәйкес келетін стратегияларды қолдану бойынша мұғалімдердің тәжірибесін зерттеуге бағытталған. Сіздің қалауыңыз бен ыңғайыңызға қарай, сізден жеке бетпе-бет немесе онлайн сұхбатқа қатысу сұралады. Сұхбат бейресми түрде және сіздің қалауыңызға қарай ағылшын, қазақ немес орыс тілінде жүргізіледі. Сұхбат барысында сізден ағылшын тілін оқыту тәжірибеңіз туралы және оқытуда қолданатын стратегиялар мен оқу стильдері ұғымы туралы түсінігіңіз бен сеніміңіз туралы бірнеше сұрақтарға жауап беру сұралады. Сіздің рұқсатыңызбен жауаптар әрі қарай талдауда қолданылатын болғандықтан, таспаға жазылады. Егер сіз сұхбаттың жазылғанын қаламасаңыз, сұрақтарға жауап жазбаша түрде жазып алынады. Бұған қоса, сізден мәліметтерді, оқыту тәжірибеңізді және өзіңіздің оқу стиліңіз (стильдеріңіз) және оқыту әдістері туралы сұрақтарды қамтитын онлайн сауалнаманы толтыру сұралады. Соңында, сізден бірнеше кейс-сұрақтарға жазбаша жауап беру сұралады. Сіздің аты-жөніңіз және жұмыс орныңыздың аты, құжаттар, электронды файлдар және диссертацияның өзін қоса алғанда, зерттеудің барлық кезеңдерінде анонимді болады. Барлық деректер, жазбалар және келісім нысандары зерттеушінің жеке USB флэш-жадында сақталады және құпия сөзбен қорғалған жәшікте сақталады. Сіздің осы зерттеуге қатысуыңыз ерікті. Сұрақтар сезімтал тақырыптарды қозғауды көздеме де, сіз кез келген уақытта кей сұраққа жауап бергіңіз келмесе, жауап беруден бас тартуға құқығыңыз бар. Егер сіз жобадан бас тартқыңыз келсе, мұны кез келген уақытта жасай аласыз және сәйкесінше барлық ақпарат (таспалар, жазбалар) жойылады.

**Қатысу уақыты:** Сіздің қатысуыңыз шамамен 90 минут алады.

### ЗЕРТТЕУ ЖҰМЫСЫНА ҚАТЫСУДЫҢ ҚАУІПТЕРІ ЕН

**АРТЫҚШЫЛЫҚТАРЫ:** Осы зерттеуге байланысты қатысушылар үшін тәуекелдер өте аз. Сізді ықтимал қауіптерден қорғау үшін біз сіздің құпиялылығыңызды қамтамасыз ету үшін барлық қажетті қадамдарды жасауға ниеттіміз. Сіздің және сіздің мекемеңіздің жеке тұлғалары жасырын болады; олардың есімдері өзгертіліп, деректер қауіпсіз жерде сақталады. Сұхбаттан алынған ақпарат олардың әкімшілігімен бөлісілмейді. Өңгімелесу уақыты мен орны сізбен жеке келісіледі және сіздің жұмыс кестелеріңізге кедергі келтірмейді. Кез келген сәйкестендіретін ақпарат және барлық құпия сөзбен қорғалған файлдар зерттеу аяқталғаннан кейін сіздің жеке ақпаратыңыз

анықталмау мақсатында компьютерден жойылады. Зерттеу жобасының соңында дауыстық файл жойылады.

Бұл зерттеуден күтуге болатын артықшылықтар сіздің оқу стильдері туралы түсінігіңізбен және Қазақстандағы мектеп оқушыларының коммуникативті дағдыларын дамыту туралы түсініктеріңіз бен тәжірибелеріңізбен бөлісу болып табылады. Бұған қоса, сіздің жауаптарыңыз қазақстандық ағылшын тілін шет тілі ретінде оқыту контекстіндегі коммуникативті тілді оқытудың жүзеге асырылу және оқыту стратегиясында оқушылардың оқу стильдері ескерелуі немесе ескерілмеуі туралы жаңа ақпараттар алуға ықпал етеді. Бұл зерттеуге қатысу туралы шешіміңіз жұмысыңызға немесе қызметіңіздегі мәртебеңізге әсер етпейді. Бұл зерттеудің көпшілікке қолжетімді ету керек болған жағдайда сіздің атыңыз немесе сізді анықтауға болатын кез келген басқа жеке ақпарат қамтылмайтын болады.

**ҚАТЫСУШЫ ҚҰҚЫҚТАРЫ:** Егер Сіз берілген формамен танысып, зерттеу жұмысына қатысуға шешім қабылдасаңыз, сіздің қатысуыңыз ерікті түрде екенін хабарлаймыз. Сондықтан кез келген уақытта ешқандай айыппұлсыз келісіміңізді қайтарып алуға немесе қатысуды тоқтатуға құқығыңыз бар. Сондай-ақ, қандай да бір сұрақтарға жауап бермеуіңізге де әбден болады. Бұл зерттеу жұмысының нәтижелері академиялық немесе кәсіби мақсаттарда баспаға ұсынылуы немесе шығарылуы мүмкін.

**БАЙЛАНЫС АҚПАРАТЫ:**

Зерттеуші: Нұрдәулетова Әсел, «Көптілді білім беру» мамандығының 2-курс магистранты.

Жоғары білім беру мектебі, Назарбаев Университеті, Астана, Қазақстан.

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*СҰРАҚТАРЫҢЫЗ БОЙЫНША:* Егер жүргізіліп отырған зерттеу жұмысының процесі, қаупі мен артықшылықтары туралы сұрағыңыз немесе шағымыңыз болса, келесі байланыс құралдары арқылы зерттеушінің магистрлық тезисі бойынша жетекшісімен хабарласуыңызға болады. (Мишель Бедекер, [michelle.bedecker@nu.edu.kz](mailto:michelle.bedecker@nu.edu.kz))

*ДЕРБЕС БАЙЛАНЫС АҚПАРАТТАРЫ:* Егер берілген зерттеу жұмысының жүргізілуімен қанағаттанбасаңыз немесе сұрақтарыңыз бен шағымдарыңыз болса, Назарбаев Университеті Жоғары Білім беру мектебінің Зерттеу Комитетімен көрсетілген байланыс құралдары арқылы хабарласуыңызға болады: электрондық поштамен [gse\\_researchcommittee@nu.edu.kz](mailto:gse_researchcommittee@nu.edu.kz).

Зерттеу жұмысына қатысуға келісіміңізді берсеңіз, берілген формаға қол қоюыңызды сұраймыз.

- Мен берілген формамен мұқият таныстым;
- Мен 18 жастамын, немесе 18ден үлкенмін;

- Маған зерттеу жұмысының мақсаты мен оның процедурасы жайында толық ақпарат берілді;
- Жинақталған ақпарат пен құпия мәліметтерге тек зерттеушінің өзіне қолжетімді және мәлім болатынын толық түсінемін;
- Мен кез келген уақытта ешқандай түсініктемесіз зерттеу жұмысына қатысудан бас тартуыма болатынын түсінемін;
- Мен жоғарыда аталып өткен ақпаратты саналы түрде қабылдап, осы зерттеу жұмысына қатысуға өз келісімімді беремін.
- Мен сұхбатты аудиожазбаға жазуға рұқсат беремін: Иә  Жоқ

Қолы: \_\_\_\_\_ Күні: \_\_\_\_\_

## ФОРМА ИНФОРМИРОВАННОГО СОГЛАСИЯ

### Изучение роли стилей обучения в педагогике учителей НИШ: качественное исследование

**ОПИСАНИЕ:** Вы приглашены принять участие в исследовании, в котором изучаются убеждения и взгляды казахстанских учителей EFL (английского языка) о роли стилей обучения в развитии коммуникативной компетентности учащихся. Исследование предпринято Асель Нурдаулетовой, магистрантом второго курса по специальности «Полиязычное образование». Исследование также направлено на изучение опыта учителей в применении стратегий, учитывающих стили обучения казахстанских учащихся преподавании английского языка. Вам будет предложено принять участие в индивидуальном очном или онлайн-интервью, в зависимости от ваших предпочтений и удобства. Интервью будет неформальным и будет проводиться на английском, русском или казахском языках в зависимости от ваших предпочтений. Во время интервью вас попросят ответить на несколько вопросов о вашей практике в классе, понимании и восприятии концепции стилей обучения и стратегий, которые вы используете в преподавании английского языка. С вашего разрешения ответы будут записаны, так как они будут использованы в дальнейшем анализе. В случае, если вы не хотите, чтобы разговор был записан на диктофон, то мы можем законспектировать ваши ответы. Кроме того, вам будет предложено заполнить онлайн-анкету, которая включает ваши данные, опыт преподавания и вопросы о вашем собственном стиле(ах) обучения и методах обучения. Наконец, вас попросят предоставить письменные ответы на некоторые кейс-вопросы. Ваше имя и название вашего рабочего места будут анонимными на всех этапах исследования, включая документы, электронные файлы и саму диссертацию. Все данные, записи и формы согласия будут сохранены на личном USB-накопителе исследователя и на личном компьютере исследователя, защищенном паролем. Ваше участие в этом исследовании является добровольным. Хотя вопросы и не предполагают затрагивание каких-либо деликатных тем, Вы имеете право отказаться отвечать на определенные вопросы. В случае, если Вы хотите выйти из проекта, вы можете сделать это в любое время, и вся информация (записи, заметки) будет удалена.

**ВРЕМЯ УЧАСТИЯ:** Ваше участие займет около 90 минут.

**РИСКИ И ПРЕИМУЩЕСТВА:** Риски, связанные с данным исследованием, минимальны. Чтобы защитить вас от возможных рисков, все необходимые шаги будут предприняты для обеспечения вашей конфиденциальности. Ваша личность и личность вашего учреждения будут скрыты; таким образом, ваше имя в документах будет заменена псевдонимами, а данные будут храниться в надежном месте. Никакая информация из интервью не будет передана вашей администрации. Время и место собеседования будут согласованы с вами лично и не будут мешать вашему рабочему графику. Любая идентифицирующая информация и все файлы, защищенные паролем,

будут удалены с компьютера после завершения исследования, чтобы ваша личность не была раскрыта. По окончании исследовательского проекта голосовой файл будет удален.

Преимущества, которые можно разумно ожидать от этого исследования, заключаются в том, чтобы поделиться вашим пониманием стилей обучения, а также вашим восприятием и опытом развития коммуникативных навыков школьников в Казахстане. Кроме того, ваши ответы помогут получить новое представление о реализации коммуникативного преподавания языка в казахстанском контексте преподавания, а также о том, учитываются ли стили обучения учащихся стратегиями учителей. Ваше решение участвовать в этом исследовании не повлияет на вашу работу или профессиональный статус. Любой отчет об этом исследовании, доступный для общественности, не будет включать ваше имя или любую другую личную информацию, по которой вас можно было бы идентифицировать.

**ПРАВА УЧАСТНИКА:** Если вы прочитали данную форму и решили принять участие в этом проекте, Вы должны понимать, что Ваше участие является добровольным. Таким образом, вы имеете право отозвать свое согласие или прекратить участие в любое время без каких-либо штрафных санкций. В качестве альтернативы, можно не участвовать в исследовании и отказаться отвечать на конкретные вопросы. Результаты данного исследования могут быть представлены или опубликованы в научных или профессиональных целях

#### **КОНТАКТЫ:**

Исследователь: Асель Нурдаулетова, магистрант 2 курса по специальности «Полиязычное образование».

Высшая школа образования Назарбаев Университета, Астана, Казахстан.

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Тел: +7-702-699-42-79

Вопросы: Если у Вас есть вопросы, замечания или жалобы по поводу данного исследования, процедуры его проведения, рисков и преимуществ, Вы можете связаться с руководителем магистерского тезиса исследователя: Мишель Бедекер, [michelle.bedeker@nu.edu.kz](mailto:michelle.bedeker@nu.edu.kz).

Независимые контакты: Если Вы не удовлетворены проведением данного исследования, если у Вас возникли какие-либо проблемы, жалобы или вопросы, Вы можете связаться с Комитетом Исследований Высшей Школы Образования Назарбаев Университета, отправив письмо на электронный адрес [gse\\_researchcommittee@nu.edu.kz](mailto:gse_researchcommittee@nu.edu.kz).

Пожалуйста, подпишите данную форму, если Вы согласны участвовать в исследовании.

- Я внимательно изучил представленную информацию;

- Я подтверждаю, что мне 18 лет или более;
- Мне предоставили полную информацию о целях и процедуре исследования;
- Я понимаю, как будут использованы собранные данные, и что доступ к любой конфиденциальной информации будет иметь только исследователь;
- Я понимаю, что вправе в любой момент отказаться от участия в данном исследовании без объяснения причин;
- С полным осознанием всего вышеизложенного я согласен принять участие в исследовании по собственной воле.
- Я даю разрешение на аудио-запись интервью: Да  Нет

Подпись: \_\_\_\_\_ Дата: \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix B**

**Questionnaire**

**A: Personal and education details**

*Please circle the appropriate answer or add more details if you choose 'Other'.*

- **Age:**

20-30	30-40	40-50	50-60
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- **Gender: Female/Male/Other**
- **Language/s. Please highlight the appropriate answer and add languages (column 3 & 4) if applicable**

Home language (your first language)	L2 (your second language)	L3 (foreign language)	Other Languages
 Kazakh OR  Russian	 Russian OR  Kazakh		

Tick  or  and add majors if applicable

- **Education**

Bachelor	Master	Doctoral	Other
Major:	Graduate Major: (only if applicable)	Research focus:	

Tick  the boxes in the table below as appropriate to your experience **of teaching English as a foreign language (EFL)**

Years	1-5	6-10	11-15	15 and more
1. General EFL teaching experience				
2. Teaching experience at intellectual school				

### B: Your Learning Style

Please read each statement. Tick  or  if you agree/disagree with a statement.

**There is no right or wrong answer.**

1. I often solve problems using a step-by-step approach rather than guessing.
2. I prefer simple, straightforward things rather than something complicated.
3. When judging a new idea or solution, it is important for me to consider if it works in practice or not.
4. When I hear about a new idea I immediately start working out how I can try it out.
5. I am quite keen on sticking to fixed routines, keeping to timetables, and following logical thinking patterns.
6. I work better with logical and analytical people rather than spontaneous people.
7. I tend to evaluate things very thoroughly. I don't like jumping to conclusions
8. I like new and unusual ideas more than practical ones.
9. I prefer to make decisions very carefully after weighing up all the other possibilities first.
10. I quite like to do things spontaneously rather than planning them out in advance.

- 11. I don't like having to act under tight deadlines when I could have spent more time thinking about possible solutions.
- 12. I do whatever I need to do, to get the job done.
- 13. In meetings, I enjoy contributing to discussions with ideas, just as they occur to me.
- 14. I usually do more talking than listening.
- 15. I usually do more listening than talking.
- 16. I like to find out how things work.

**C. Teaching preferences**

*Please read each statement below and respond to the statements as they apply to your teaching of English as a foreign language. Indicate: agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, disagree.*

4
\_\_\_\_\_3\_\_\_\_\_
\_\_\_\_\_2\_\_\_\_\_
\_\_\_\_\_1\_\_\_\_\_

**Agree**                      **Somewhat Agree**                      **Somewhat Disagree**                      **Disagree**

**For example, if you *somewhat agree* with the statement, please underline or highlight the corresponding number in the box.**

4	<u>3</u>	2	1
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1. The best teaching sessions convey straight facts in a clear way.	4	3	2	1
2. In teaching a language class, a teacher must strictly follow the course plan, the lesson plan, or the textbook.	4	3	2	1
3. Students learn best when the lesson has a clear structure with a clear purpose.	4	3	2	1

4. I like giving students practical work in class (E.g. Practice writing an introduction in a writing lesson.)	4	3	2	1
5. I normally explain rules before I get students to produce real-life communication.	4	3	2	1
6. Students receive frequent verbal and/or written comments on their performance.	4	3	2	1
7. I tend to involve students in active forms of learning such as discussion, role-playing.	4	3	2	1
8. I often give students problem-solving tasks to get them to reflect on real world problems.	4	3	2	1
9. When students don't understand something, I try to encourage them to figure it out for themselves first.	4	3	2	1
10. When possible, I give students models of successful work from other people when giving assignments.	4	3	2	1
11. When possible, I explain language concepts by making drawings (e.g. concept mapping / mind mapping).	4	3	2	1
12. I like showing students how they can apply different language concepts in different situations.	4	3	2	1
13. I think students learn better with instructions that allow them to hear what they are learning.	4	3	2	1
14. Students must be given a chance to learn a language by trying and making mistakes.	4	3	2	1

15. I think students learn better if I can show them how to do things or demonstrate ways of thinking. (E.g. Showing how to work out the answers in class.).	4	3	2	1
16. I believe that students learn best to communicate by having spontaneous interaction.	4	3	2	1

## Appendix C

Please read and reflect on the descriptions of classroom cases and complete the “Reflection” and “What would you do?” columns.

Scenario №	Description	Reflection	What would you do?
<b>Scenario 1.</b>	<p>Zhuldyz is conducting an English lesson for grade 8. She needs to explain the First Conditional. She started her class by explaining the appropriate grammatical structure because she thinks this is the primary step helpful to generate learners' language production. However, one of her students seems inattentive because she does not understand the rules. She is usually actively engaged in activities involving visuals, such as images and charts. She also likes to watch videos on Youtube.</p>	<p>What do you think is the possible reason that causes the learning difficulties?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How would you address the problem in this situation?</li> <li>2. What specific tasks would you recommend to <b>Zhuldyz/Aina/Gulnaz and Aruzhan?</b></li> <li>3. What techniques do you usually use with such students in your practice?</li> </ol>
<b>Scenario 2.</b>	<p>Aina has to teach the Present Simple Tense to students in grade 7. First, she played a Youtube clip about daily routines to elicit the</p>		

	<p>concept of the grammatical structure. Then she proceeded to get students to create a photo story. For this, she distributed a series of photos for students to put in sequence to make up a story. Then students were told to role-play the story. To do this task, Aina randomly assigned students to small groups. However, one of her students finds it meaningless to participate in activities that require interacting and communicating with other students. She prefers to receive a step-by-step explanation of the rule and work it out independently before producing a language pattern.</p>		
<p><b>Scenario 3.</b></p>	<p><b>Gulnaz</b> tends to teach grammar inductively by presenting some examples that illustrate a concept without providing an explicit explanation. She expects students to recognize how the concept works naturally from examples provided. In the meantime, one of the students has a challenge identifying a rule unless it is verbalized and elicited clearly. The student processes the information well by using translation, thus they often tend to translate words from her home</p>		

	language (Kazakh) into English to make up sentences. She also needs the teacher to translate some English words into Kazakh.		
<b>Scenario 4.</b>	<p><b>Aruzhan</b> prefers to explain grammatical rules by modeling a word or sentence. She often invites students to repeat utterances using some drills, after which the students talk to each other using the patterns. She often puts her learners in pairs and groups so that students can learn better and more with peers. She often tends to correct errors that some of the students make while communicating. The teacher constantly challenges them to say it right.</p> <p>One of the students in the classroom makes slips such as forgetting, blurring, or mixing up the sentence structure, although they still manage to communicate the meaning.</p>		

## Appendix D

## Sample of practice-based scenario responses

Scenario №	Description	Reflection	What would you do?
1.	<p>Zhuldyz is conducting an English lesson for grade 8. She needs to explain the First Conditional. She started her class by explaining the appropriate grammatical structure because she thinks this is the primary step helpful to generate learners' language production.</p> <p>However, one of her students seems inattentive because she does not understand the rules. She is usually actively engaged in activities involving visuals, such as images and charts. She also likes to watch videos on Youtube.</p>	<p>The teacher should have known that starting a new grammar topic with explanation of "boring" rules is not an effective approach. Exactly this technique has taken away the student's interest in a new theme.</p>	<p><b>1.</b> How would you address the problem in this situation?</p> <p><b>2.</b> What specific tasks would you recommend to Zhuldyz/Aina/Gulnaz and Aruzhan?</p> <p><b>3.</b> What techniques do you usually use with such students in your practice?</p> <p>1. In this case, I would demonstrate a picture of a specific conditional action that might happen in the future and let students guess what we are going to do during the lesson.</p> <p>2. I would recommend Zhuldyz use more visual instruments (images/motion pictures/drawings on the board etc.) to grab students' attention from the first seconds.</p> <p>3. As I mentioned above, I use visuals in the most beginning or ask situational questions (e.g., What will you do if you meet your old mate tomorrow?) to make them experience the situation in their minds. These approaches help learners much better to be absorbed with this condition and build cleaner path to understand a new grammatical rule.</p>

## **Appendix E**

### **Interview Protocol**

**Project:** Exploring the Role of Learning Styles in NIS Teachers' EFL Pedagogy: A Qualitative Inquiry

**Time of Interview:**

**Date:**

**Place:**

**Interviewer:**

**Interviewee:**

**Position of Interviewee:**

**Questions:**

1. Could you describe your role as an English language teacher?
2. Can you give me an example of how you usually conduct your lessons (techniques or activities you most commonly use; how you start/end your lessons; or how you present a new topic/lesson material) Do you normally follow this approach? Why/Why not?
3. Can you give an example of a time when you realized that your lesson did not reach your students' understanding? What did you do differently to ensure their understanding and why did you do it?
4. What methods or teaching strategies do you believe help your students achieve linguistic competence (in your teaching practice)? Why do you consider them effective?
5. Do you vary or adjust classroom activities based on your learners' needs? How?
6. Do you think learners are all different? How do they learn differently? Can you provide some examples of your students' individual differences and how do you try to accommodate them in your classes?
7. Could you explain any challenges that your learners may face in language learning? How do you address these challenges?
8. Is there anything you would like to add?

## Appendix F

### Transcript sample

#### Interview

**Interviewer:** What do you think is your role as an English teacher? What are your main principles?

**Participant 3:** Oh, this is a huge question because the teacher in general has many roles today. And I think it's, it's with the world, which is changing very fast. And especially that today we have an abundance of teaching tools, as well as strategies and techniques. And everything depends on the teachers' competence and teachers' beliefs, and also teachers' expertise on methodology, and actually also on psychological instruments to research students' personalities, and to diagnose but to make diagnostics of students learning, and way of thinking, type of thinking, their learning styles, their multiple intelligences, like, what their abilities are, and so on. I think the main role of an English teacher is to help students with learning language to apply it to their future profession, of course. But alongside with it, English language methodology today is oriented, I think, on critical thinking a lot. Because what we see in resources to the teaching resources, like textbooks and other resources, the content usually like touches upon controversial issues, global issues, issues with United Nations activities, climate change, environmental issues, and that is why I think, in parallel with language teaching, I also teach students critical thinking and analysis: to analyze text, to analyze everything with what they hear. I think it's also connected a lot with thinking and with reasoning.

**Interviewer:** Since you talked about critical thinking, how do you normally use strategies to reinforce students' critical thinking? if you could give me some examples, maybe of techniques that you use to develop critical thinking?

**Participant 3:** I think the most often used is questioning. So, we build different kinds of questions. Such as yes/no questions, the easiest and the most simple level; then WH questions which are specific questions like why, when, who how and so on. But why questions and how questions usually require a specific level of critical thinking and usually they are put at the end. After the student gives the answer to simple questions, detailed questions, main ideas and details. After that, we can only ask the questions like why and how, when the student needs to evaluate, to find the reasons to find the consequences of some event or someone's behavior. So according to Bloom's Taxonomy. And also what I like we use Questions like, 'if you were somebody, how would you.... or some creative questions. Also if you could create a new machine for something, so, what would it be and so on. So the questions which will make the student hypothesize, what would happen? So questioning I think, is the most often used, then, the next one, Venn diagram. We also use it quite often, especially when we, for example, study global warming and climate change. And then we ask students, is it the same? Or are they two different phenomena? So, they would read the text, or they would watch a video or something, and then they would draw it and details then come to a conclusion, draw a conclusion, is it the same way or not. Other techniques are using graphic organizers, for example.

**Interviewer:** Do you think that these techniques work for all students? Or there might be some kind of challenges in implementing them? And what are those challenges?

**Participant 1:** I think the questions work with all students. Because this is what we use in real life in everyday communication. Questions are, we are used to asking questions and we are used to answering questions...we got used to them. But as for, for example, Venn diagram, yes, we cannot give it, for example, to students who struggle with reading and

understanding the text. So here, we need to use some simple graphic organizers like subheadings, where students can put each, for example, in one we write, who is somebody, somebody, and then the students try to find it. So it's more, it will be more detailed. For somebody who struggles with support, with a lot of vocabulary support, and so on. So that's why maybe besides questioning it doesn't work for everyone.

**Interviewer:** Do you try to adjust these activities?

**Participant 3:** Yes, yes, yes. And to arrange the questions as well, and what we expect from different kinds of students, our expectations will be also different.

**Interviewer:** So, could you elaborate on what you mean by different kinds of students? Do you believe that learners learn differently and if you could provide some examples of those differences in learning?

**Participant 3:** Yes, now? Yes, yes. Well, in our school, we have trainers for differentiated learning. And those trainers explained us that today, one size doesn't fit all. So that means we have different learners, and they have first of all different **physical characteristics, they have different Psychological Types, they have various intelligences**, like somebody will be good at music, somebody will be good at linguistic proficiency somebody will be good at scientific proficiency at math and so on, they are all different. They have various reading proficiency and competence as well. Their literacy, **functional literacy will be different**. And they will be different. Somebody will be a **kinesthetic learner; somebody will be a visual learner**. Another one will be audio and some, usually they are mixed, but with some dominance of one of type learning styles. So it's a diversity of students.

**Interviewer:** So how do you try to accommodate those differences? learning differences or individual differences... normally in your teaching practice?

**Participant 3:** Usually, I do it through grouping. I can put them in small groups like this or bigger groups. And for each of these groups, I will assign different tasks, usually. And I also give them the choice to choose the outcome. For example, somebody can make it in the form of a written report, somebody will make this report in visual form diagrams, for example, for those learners who are more visual oriented, visual learners. Somebody will choose, for example, role plays where they can move and manipulate objects and so on. So, in this way.