

Course: Study Skills
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Learning Styles and Strategies

1. Learning Styles

The main objectives of the lecture are as follows:

By the end of the lecture, students will be able to:

- ✓ Distinguish between learning styles and learning strategies.
- ✓ Get an overview of three most popular learning styles.
- ✓ Differentiate between characteristics of each learning style.

Introduction

Learning styles and strategies are two key variables affecting language learning (Wilson, 2012). Styles refer to the general approaches to learning a language, while strategies refer to the specific behaviors or thoughts learners use to enhance their language learning. Language learning styles and strategies are among the main factors that help determine how –and how well –students learn a second or foreign language. In this respect, if there is harmony between the students’ styles and strategies and the instructional materials, then the student is likely to perform well, feel confident, and experience low anxiety. If there is no harmony between the students’ styles and strategies and the instructional materials, then the students may not show good performance, feel unconfident, and experience significant anxiety (Oxford, 2001). This claim refers to the Learning Style Hypothesis, which states that ‘learning will be ineffective, or at least less efficient than it could be, if learners receive instruction that does not take account of their learning style’ (Mcdaniel, Bjork, & Rohrer, 2008, p. 108).

1.1.The Difference between Learning Styles and Learning Strategies

As mentioned previously, learning styles are general approaches to language learning, while learning strategies are specific ways to deal with language tasks in particular contexts (Oxford, 2003). More specifically, learning strategies refer to the actions and behaviours that depend greatly on students’ learning styles including the ways in which students learn, remember

information, and study for tests. In contrast, learning styles refer to the broad approaches that students use in acquiring a new language or in learning any other subject.

1.2. Learning Styles Definition

Learning styles refer to the general approaches to learning –for example, global or analytic, auditory or visual –that students use to acquire a new language or learn any other subject (Celcia-Murcia, 2001). These styles are ‘the overall patterns that give general direction to learning behavior’ (Cornett,1983, p.9). Additionally, the concept of learning styles was defined by Mcdaniel, Bjork, and Rohrer (2008) as ‘individuals differ in regard to what mode of instruction or study is most effective for them’ (p.1).

1. 3. Types of Learning Styles

The most popular learning styles can be classified into three main areas: visual, auditory, and kinesthetic (movement-oriented) (Gilakjani, 2012).

1.3.1. Visual:

Definition of Visual Learner

Is a learning style that uses the sense of sight or focuses on vision. So, it is easier for learners to understand and remember the material if they see it as a visual material (Fuadah, 2023). Usually, visual learners prefer the use of images, maps, visual media, graphic organizers, diagrams, colour-coordination, and other visual elements to access, understand, and process new information. Visual learners are characterized by having good spatial awareness and sense of direction. They enjoy reading textbooks or attending lectures where the material is presented on slides (including charts/graphs). They like coloring and drawing, capturing detail, and remember what they saw.

Characteristics of Visual Learner

A person with a visual style has a number of distinctive characteristics.

- Prefer to see or read text that contains pictures, diagrams, charts, graphs, photos, etc
- Often take notes using pencils, pens, or markers of various colors. Because they tend to remember things more easily if they appear in different colors diverse.
- What they see tends to be easier to remember, so whatever happens they can see and they will remember it immediately.
- Memorizing material.

However, Bendahmane (2023) summarized some weaknesses visual learners can struggle with:

- Information is not presented to them in a visual format (text, graphics, etc.)
- They are restricted from jotting down notes or drawing diagrams that help them understand things
- They are not allowed to experiment with how they visualize information.

1.3.2. Auditory Learner

Definition of Auditory

Auditory learning style is a learning style that uses hearing. People with this learning style will understand something and remember it when they hear the explanation. Whatever is heard later tends to be easy to remember and easy to understand.

Most people who like this learning require concentration in listening. Both in class when teachers and lecturers explain material, or through seminars, speeches, and so on.

Characteristics of Auditory Learning Styles

A person with a visual style has a number of distinctive characteristics.

- Repeating back details from lectures when asked questions
- Storytelling
- Listening
- Holding conversations
- Verbal communication

On the other hand, auditory learners can struggle with:

- Any distraction (people talking, music playing) can take away from their focus needed to learn the material at hand.
- Environment where they cannot verbally participate (discussions with others or answering questions). They might feel lost and struggle to follow along.

1.3.3. Kinesthetic (physical):

Individuals that are kinesthetic learn best with an active “hands-on” approach. These learners favour interaction with the physical world. These students are hands-on learners and learn best through figuring things out by hand.

Physical learners are characterized by having high level of energy, and they perform well in art and drama, experiments, practical exercises and role playing. Kinesthetic learners may find paying attention in a traditional classroom difficult. This is because sitting for long periods does not allow them to move around, which can help with focus and engagement.

Characteristics of Kinesthetic Learners

Husnul (2023) summarized the main characteristics of Kinesthetic learners as follows:

- Speak slowly.
- Responds to physical attention.
- Touching people to get their attention.
- Stand close when talking to people.
- Always be physically oriented and move a lot.
- Learn through manipulation and practice.
- Memorize by walking and looking.
- Use fingers as a pointer when reading.
- Uses a lot of body signals.
- Cannot sit still for a long time.

Kinesthetic learners can struggle when they are:

- Asked to sit down and remain inactive for long stretches
- Discouraged from fidgeting or moving around when the situation requires general immobility
- Presented information without the opportunity for the learner to absorb or repeat the information while doing something physical
- Forced to stay in one learning environment over the course of a day.

Practice

- ✓ Why is it important to find the right learning style for you?
- ✓ How could awareness of your learning styles be beneficial for your studies?
- ✓ Fill in the provided questionnaire and determine your dominant learning style.