

Language Learning Styles and Strategies

Learning styles are the general approaches used by students to acquire a new language or to learn any other subject (Oxford, 2003). Cornett (1983) defines styles as “the overall patterns that give general direction to learning behavior” (p. 9) and Dunn and Griggs (1988) as the “biologically and developmentally imposed set of characteristics that make the same teaching method wonderful for some and terrible for others” (p. 3). Generally, there are 4 aspects of learning styles: sensory preferences, personality types, desired degree of generality, and biological differences.

Learning strategies are “the ways in which learners attempt to work out the meanings and uses of words, grammatical rules, and other aspects of the language they are learning” (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p. 331). For Scarcella & Oxford (1992), they are “specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques -- such as seeking out conversation partners, or giving oneself encouragement to tackle a difficult language task -- used by students to enhance their own learning” (p. 63). Oxford (2003) classifies learning strategies into six groups: cognitive, metacognitive, memory-related, compensatory, affective, and social.

Learning Styles

sensory preferences

visual

auditory

Kinesthetic
and tactile

The Three Perceptual Channels



AUDITORY
Spoken words, sounds...
what is **heard** and **said**



KINESTHETIC
Emotions, actions,
movement, taste, smell...
what is **felt**



VISUAL
Printed materials, facial
expressions, body language...
what is **seen**



personality types

Extraverted vs. Introverted

Extraverts gain their greatest energy from the external world. They want interaction with people and have many friendships, some deep and some not. In contrast, introverts derive their energy from the internal world, seeking solitude and tending to have just a few friendships, which are often very deep.

Intuitive-Random vs. Sensing-Sequential

Intuitive-random students think in abstract, futuristic, large-scale, and nonsequential ways. They like to create theories and new possibilities, often have sudden insights, and prefer to guide their own learning. In contrast, sensing-sequential learners are grounded in the here and now. They like facts rather than theories, want guidance and specific instruction from the teacher, and look for consistency.



desired degree of generality

Global or holistic students like socially interactive, communicative events in which they can emphasize the main idea and avoid analysis of grammatical details. They are comfortable even when not having all the information, and they feel free to guess from the context. **Analytic students** tend to concentrate on grammatical details and often avoid more free-flowing communicative activities. Because of their concern for precision, analytic learners typically do not take the risks necessary for guessing from the context unless they are fairly sure of the accuracy of their guesses.

biological differences

Biorhythms reveal the times of day when students feel good and perform their best. Some L2 learners are morning people, while others do not want to start learning until the afternoon, and still others are creatures of the evening, happily “pulling an all-nighter” when necessary. **Sustenance** refers to the need for food or drink while learning. Quite a number of L2 learners do not feel comfortable learning without a candy bar, a cup of coffee, or a soda in hand, but others are distracted from study by food and drink. **Location** involves the nature of the environment: temperature, lighting, sound, and even the firmness of the chairs. L2 students differ widely with regard to these environmental factors.

"Let me see it!"	"Just tell me!"	"Let me do it!"
Visual Learners 	Auditory Learners 	Kinesthetic Learners 
65% of the population During lectures or discussions, visual learners often prefer to take detailed notes, read handouts, make diagrams or illustrations, and view videos.	30% of the population Auditory learners prefer verbal lectures, discussions, talking things through and listening to what others have to say (tone of voice, pitch, speed and other nuances).	5% of the population Kinesthetic learners prefer a "hands-on" approach to learning by actively exploring concepts and constructs within their learning environment.

Thinking vs. Feeling

Thinking learners are oriented toward the stark truth, even if it hurts some people's feelings. They want to be viewed as competent and do not tend to offer praise easily—even though they might secretly desire to be praised themselves. Sometimes they seem detached. In comparison, feeling learners value other people in very personal ways. They show empathy and compassion through words, not just behaviors, and say whatever is needed to smooth over difficult situations.

Closure-oriented/Judging vs. Open/Perceiving

Closure-oriented students want to reach judgments or completion quickly and want clarity as soon as possible. These students are serious, hardworking learners who like to be given written information and enjoy specific tasks with deadlines. In contrast, open learners want to stay available for continuously new perceptions and are therefore sometimes called "perceiving." They take L2 learning less seriously, treating it like a game to be enjoyed rather than a set of tasks to be completed.

References

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