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The Importance of Learning Styles in Teaching Process

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Abstract: The article deals with discussing the importance of learning styles in teaching process. Nowadays, the study of foreign languages is an important aspect of modern life. The importance of learning styles is that it serves as a system of teaching that allows multiplying the results achieved rather than a simple sum of the results of every teacher and every learner. The article analyzes the efficiency of learning styles in teaching foreign languages.

Keywords: learning styles, communicative skills, performance of tasks, meta-cognition, kinesthetic, auditory, communicative competence

Today mostly all researchers and educators agree that communicative competence is an appropriate goal for training future English language teachers.

It is apparent that every student learns in a personal way that is different from others. The differences in learning were found in learning styles, or through the unique features that each student possesses when they engage in the study, in the performance of tasks or in solving cognitive problems. The concept of learning style is now a very disputable topic because it runs contrary methodologies that highlight more aspects of the students' personality such as social interactions, emotional skills and attitudes. Other criticisms of the concept stem from considerations about the inaccurate theoretical substrate and the lack of effectiveness in teaching.

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results of every teacher and every learner. It requires thorough knowledge of the students who attend classes, particularly learning styles. This is not to assess the merits or attributes but to understand in what way the students that we face, "work": what are the preferred sensory pathways (auditory, visual, kinesthetic, visual-auditory, auditory-kinesthetic, all three together), what are the prevailing modes of information processing (analytical-sequential, synthetic-global, by inference, by induction, by divergent or convergent), which are the languages most efficient (verbal, body-gestural , body-verbal, graphic, reading and writing etc.). A host of students appear passive, showing a low level of participation. They have the sense of exclusion or inadequacy than teachers, classmates or even disciplines[1]. Knowing their own cognitive processes and learning styles can help students understand that their sense of helplessness is not due to incapacity or personal difficulties but methods which are not fully responsive to their styles.

Meta-cognition is also an efficacious tool for the enhancement of excellence, their knowledge and skills, their professional life in future. Benefits of teaching are based on the styles of learning possessing two advantages: on the one hand allows students to understand how significantly they learn (meta-cognition), making them safer, more motivated and more active; the other side is an incentive for teachers to customize the educational action so as to be of interest to all students, according to their preferential styles. Alternative effective solutions to difficulties encountered in implementing the daily teaching action can be found in the systematic methodology of the teaching. A majority of teachers believe that the customization of teaching requires a serious commitment that cannot always be done. It should be noted, however, where the difficulties of the didactic seem to be insurmountable, personalized instruction

[1] Canale, M. "From Communicative Competence to Communicative Language Pedagogy". In J.C. Richards and R. W. Schmidt, (eds.). Language and Communication. New York: Longman.1983

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allows to implement a teaching more effective, less expensive and far more rewarding for both teachers and students. What is certain is that an individual teacher cannot and should not face this type of teaching in isolation.

The personalized didactic refers to a specific programming for each student and a consequent individualized teaching. This reference does not always correspond to the truth, but be exact only in cases of children with functional diagnosis, specific learning disabilities or with a serious social, economic, linguistic or cultural disadvantage. For "normal" students, however, the customization of teaching is achieved through actions and the diagnostic evaluation (the so-called entry test) which is made at the beginning of each school year. If students know their learning styles, it provides a chance for teachers to understand how they learn (meta-cognition), make them safer, more motivated, more active and participatory. It offers the opportunity to enhance learning in school and personal study at home. For teachers to know the learning styles of the students is a stimulus to the customization of the didactic so as to be of interest to all students, according to their preferred styles. Every student is different from the others in terms of their cognitive skills, knowledge, strategies, motivation and learning styles, but it does not mean that one is better than another.

Learning styles indicate the strategy or strategies mainly used in learning, and they define how the students and we all learn. Cognitive aspect[2] of the learning style is an individual subjective matter which refers to the "black box", the mind learns, without putting emphasis on socio-relational aspects. It is not related to different levels of intelligence and abilities, but how we use that intelligence and ability[3].

[2] Brown, J. D. The Elements of Language Curriculum. Boston: Heinle & Heinle Publishers.1995
[3] Biggs J.B. Teaching for learning. The view from cognitive psychology. -Hawthorn: ACER, 1991.

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Hence, learning requires from students to know and adopt their style, to have experience with different styles, to recognize the characteristics of the task and the material that is most appropriate to use one style over another.

In a broader sense, learning style refers to how people interpret, distinguish, and process knowledge and context. It is defined as the "composite of characteristic cognitive, affective, and physiological factors that serve as relatively stable indicators of how a learner perceives, interacts with, and responds to the learning environment"[4]. It is commonly known that people learn and process information in different ways. Some people prefer to learn by listening or reading, others prefer to work with other people in the group, or solve their problems by themselves representing preferences and methods of different learning styles. It is also important to underline the fact that when a person identifies one preferred learning style, the person will be motivated to adopt the best attitude to learn.

Three major sensory receivers, namely visual, auditory and kinesthetic assist to determine the prominent learning style. "It is based on modalities – channels by which human expression can take place and is composed of a combination of perception and memory". These three modalities enable learners to receive and learn new information or experiences.

According to modality theorists, teachers should deliver information utilizing all three styles which provides learners with the chance to become involved no matter whether they are visual, auditory or kinesthetic learners.

Learning style: Visual

The favorite is the visual sensory channel. Students learn better with visual images, visual diagrams, videos, drawings and tables, it tends to display images representing the topics covered. The visual memory is more pronounced than verbal. The process of information is proceeding by mental images to accomplish a task by following visual instructions.

[4] Brown H. Principles of Language Learning and Teaching. - New York: Pearson Education, 2000.

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These types of learners possess two sub-channels, namely linguistic and spatial. The learners possess the former sub-channel are keen on learning via written language. They can easily remember what they have written down without reading it at least once. The latter sub-channel learners find written language difficult to comprehend and prefer doing charts, demonstrations, videos and alternative visual materials. To combine this learning style into the learning atmosphere it would be better to:

- utilize graphs, charts, illustrations or other visual aids;
- comprise outlines, concept maps, agendas, handouts, etc. for reading and taking notes;
- comprise much content in handouts to reread after the learning session;
- leave white space in handouts for note-taking;
- provide questions to help them stay awake in lectures;
- highlight key points to signal when to takes notes;
- add textual information with examples if it is possible;
- let them draw pictures in the borders.

Learning style: kinesthetic

It is a cognitive style characterized by movement, from being active. Many details come from muscles, tendons, joints, tactile sensations, thermal and dolor touch, and movements. As visual style, kinesthetic also has two sub-channels: kinesthetic (movement) and tactile (touch). Both during the reception of stimuli and storage, the kinesthetic are active, they need to move, and in communication they tend to gesticulate a lot. In the lectures they take note just for moving their hands. In reading they first scan the material quickly to obtain the gist of it and then they read it for getting detailed information. To combine this learning style into the learning atmosphere it would be better to:

- implement activities that get the learners up and moving;
- play music during activities whenever it is suitable;

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- utilize colored markers to highlight key points on white boards;
- provide frequent stretch breaks;
- give toys such as balls which allow them something to do with their hands;
- give high lighters, colored pens and/or pencils;
- give directions to learners through a visualization of complicated tasks.

Learning style: auditory

Auditory learners prefer talking to themselves (moving their lips and reading out loud). They find reading and writing tasks more complicated. They are excellent at interacting with colleagues or tape recorders. To combine this learning style into the learning atmosphere it would be better to:

- commence new material with a short description of what is coming. Give a summary of what has been covered. This is the old adage of "tell them what they are going to lean, teach them, and tell them what they have learned".
- utilize the Socratic method of lecturing by giving questions learners and then fill in the gaps with your own responses;
- combine auditory activities, such as brainstorming, buzz groups, or jeopardy;
- allow the learners verbalize the questions;
- set an inner dialogue between yourself and the learners.

Sometimes people utilize more than one learning style, or they should change the way according to the situation in which the material is located. In Finland, it was noted that many students prefer certain styles and are disinclined to embrace the new, which may be adapted to particular situations because of fear, lack of motivation, or reluctance to work hard.

Nowadays, trends in changing and improving the learning style are critical. In Italy, the traditional organization of education aims to promote listening and writing activities, favoring only students with visual and auditory learning skills. Kinesthetic learners whose necessity of movement is always penalized, with negative consequences in the learning phase do not take benefits from doing these

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types of activities. Thus, it is significant to introduce some activities directed to all kinds of learners (visual, auditory and kinesthetic) in different ways.

In all European countries, the approach to learning styles is widely used in the field of knowledge of a foreign language, while in other areas it is almost unknown or has only recently been taken into consideration. Moreover, Scotland has used many learning styles, but the style is one of Visual, Aural, Read/write, and Kinesthetic sensory methods is more familiar. However, the learning styles are mostly used in the services of the students and are not part of a curriculum based on learning cycle. Some educators find them useful, but there are studies – as those published by *'Times Educational Supplement'* - the leading British publication about primary education, secondary and further.

It is assumed that the learning styles of the models are relatively stable, and that consist of appropriate strategies and educational approaches. Learning styles are widely identified in different areas and ways. The researchers found that the most important factor that influences learning is represented by the knowledge and perception that the student possesses. Some researchers have found that the motivation and the process of information are fundamental. The learning outcome is better when the student plays an active role.

Learning is a complicated phenomenon which intervene related factors. The teacher cannot influence the personal factors of the student. The role of the teacher is to create a suitable and friendly environment which is applicable to different styles of the students.

As educators, we have to consider and recognize how to reach all students' levels and know how to present information in a variety of ways. Students can be helped effectively, both in and outside the classroom, if the teacher and students are aware of their learning styles before groped to teach or learn new skills.

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As a student, it is important to be aware of their learning preferences in order to adapt the various techniques even when the information and the instructions do not coincide with the preferential style.

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