THE INFLUENCE OF LEARNING STYLES ON LANGUAGE TEACHING AT SECONDARY SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

Learning style refers to the ability of learners to perceive and process information in learning situations. One of the most important uses of learning styles is that it makes it easy for teachers to incorporate them into their teaching. There are different learning styles. Three of the most popular ones are visual, auditory, and kinesthetic in which students take in information. This study is an analysis of learning styles prevalent among secondary school students. It was conducted on three learning styles-visual, auditory and kinesthetic (VAK). It also tries to find out relation and effect of different learning styles on academic achievements of students. This article studies the role of learning styles on language teaching at secondary school. It is vital to mention that the work is devoted to highlight the effects of learning styles to improve learners' language skill.

Keywords: learning, learning style, academic achievement

INTRODUCTION

Every child follows its own unique way to learn and process information. They learn material in different ways. Some learn by oral repetition, some may learn by writing it out, while others may learn through practical work. Individuals thus differ in the way they learn. Learning style can be described as a set of factors, behaviours and attitudes that facilitate learning for an individual in a given situation. It is the ability of learners to perceive and process information in learning situations. Learning style is the characteristic cognitive, affective, social, and physiological behaviors that serve as relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive, interact with, and respond to the learning environment. Learning styles can be defined, classified, and identifies in many different ways. Generally, they are overall patterns that provide direction to learning and teaching.
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MATERIALS AND METHODS

Styles influence how students learn, how teacher teach, and how the two interact. Each person is born with certain tendencies toward particular styles, but these biological or inherited characteristics are influenced by culture, personal experiences, maturity level and development. Style can be considered a 'Contextual' variable or construct because what the learner brings to the learning experiences is a part of the content as well as the important features of the learners experience itself. Each learner has distinct and consistent preferred ways of perceptions, organization and retention. Students learn differently from each other and it has been determined that brain structure influences language structure acquisition. It has also been shown that different hemispheres of the brain contain different perceptions avenues. Some researchers claim that several types of cells present in some brains are not present in others are responsible for different pattern of perception among individuals. Some students are visual learners, while others are auditory or kinesthetic learners. Visual learners learn visually by means of charts, graphs, and pictures. Auditory learners learn by listening to lectures and reading. Kinesthetic learners learn by doing. Students can prefer one, two, or three learning styles. Because of these different learning styles, it is important for teachers to incorporate in their curriculum activities related to each of these learning styles so that all students are able to succeed in their classes. While we use all of our senses to take in information, we each seem to have preferences in how we learn best. In order to help all students learn, we need to teach to as many of these preferences as possible (Cuaresma, 2008). When we think about a typical class room situation, it is rare to find all three of these approaches to learning incorporated into a class. While it may seem impossible to do this, it can be done through thoughtful planning and preparation. It does force us to conceptualize the class differently with a focus on the variety of ways in which students learn. The various inventories on learning styles allow teachers to gain insight into which areas they can use further development in and which are already well developed (Cuaresma, 2008).

One of the most significant advances in education has come from a considerable amount of research done in the area of learning styles which recognizes that the students in classrooms have variety of different learning profiles. Some of the dimensions

which have been investigated in the area of learning style are perceptual learning styles, field dependence/independence, analytic/global learning styles and reflective/ impulsive learning styles. Some of the benefits of increasing learners' awareness of their own learning styles: "higher interest and motivation in the learning process, increased student responsibility for their own learning, and greater classroom community. These are affective changes, and the changes have resulted in more effective learning" (Reid, 1999). Gardner's research has shown that human cognitive ability is pluralistic rather than unitary and that learners of any subject will make greater progress if they have the opportunity to use their areas of strength to master the necessary material. He recommends that teachers use a wide variety of ways to deal with the subject because "genuine understanding is most likely to emerge and be apparent to others (Gardner, 1991). In the classroom it is possible to motivate learners by activating multiple ways of meaning-making through the use of tasks relating to the different intelligences. Providing a variety of language activities that stimulate the different tools or intelligences proposed by Gardner (1999) makes it possible to engage multiple memory pathways necessary to produce sustained deep learning (Schumann, 1997). In order to achieve the ultimate goal of student learning it is important to use a combination of teaching methods and to make the classroom environment as stimulating and interactive as possible. Students learn in many different ways According to Dunn and Dunn (1978), only 20-30% of school age children appear to be Auditory learners, 40% are visual learners, and 30-40% is tactile/kinesthetic or visual/tactile learners. Barbe and Milone (1981) stated that for school children the most frequent modality strengths are visual (30%) or mixed (30%), followed by auditory (25%), and then by kinesthetic (15%). Price, Dunn, and Sanders (1980) found that very young children are the most tactile/kinesthetic, that there is a gradual development of visual strengths through the elementary grades, and that only in fifth or sixth grade can most youngsters learn and retain information through the auditory sense. Carbo (1983), investigating the perceptual styles of readers, found that good readers prefer to learn through their visual and auditory senses, while poor readers have a stronger preference for tactile and kinesthetic learning.

RESULS AND DISCUSSION

Learning style has an important place in the lives of individuals. When the individual knows his/her learning style, s/he will integrate it in the process of learning so s/he will learn

more easily and fast and will be successful. Another advantage of the identification of the own learning style by the student is that it will help the student to become an effective problem solver. The more successful the individual is at solving the problems s/he faces, the more control s/he will take over his/her own life.

It is important that individuals receive education in areas suitable for their learning styles. A person educated in an area having no relationship to his/her learning style may lack confidence and s/he may be less successful; s/he may as a result become frustrated. Knowledge of learning style also provides information to the student as to why s/he has learnt in a different way than others. It helps to control the process of learning. It is vital because one of the most important signals in learning is to learn to be autonomous, that is, for the individual to take responsibility for his/her own learning. Because of this, s/he should know what learning style is. This has to be part of the learning process to enable the individual to obtain knowledge, which constantly shifts and changes, without any help from others.

Briefly, confidence in learning will consistently rise when learners know how to learn. Learning to learn and grasping knowledge in a suitable manner will lessen the need for an overbearing control by teachers. At this point, teachers guide the students. The students take responsibility for their learning, they are at the center of the process and everything is under their control. They search answers to the problems and benefit from their unique performances and preferences in their learning styles. Those people will identify their aims, unlike those whose learning style preferences are not identified. They know what they want to learn and "how". This awareness will change their perspectives on learning new things.

CONLCLUSION

Learning style, which can be counted as one of the techniques used for recognizing individuals, will especially assist the teachers in getting to know the group of students in front of them and pave the way for them to become much more effective. Research on this subject has suggested that the students who have experienced this learning process and approach will be more successful. This could have a great impact on learning. To achieve this success, both teachers and students should undertake many responsibilities, but the heaviest responsibility is on the teachers. The teachers should match teaching style and learning tasks to individual learners' preferred styles and provide a range of input styles and learning tasks so that the learners will

sometimes get a task in their preferred style, sometimes in the other styles, so that they can improve. Lastly, the teachers should help the students to move from one less successful style to another by using teaching styles and thinking skills. The teachers should be concrete and practical, concerned with application. They should support the students' imagination, creativity and exploration of new possibilities. In other words, the teachers should teach them to be critical and challenging. It is not so difficult to understand the learning styles and recognize them. The important thing is to recognize the students' learning style. Studying with knowledge of the learning style helps an individual to reach his/her goals quickly.

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