

LEARNING STYLES AND STRATEGY-BASED INSTRUCTION

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Learners tend to differ from one another in regard with their age, temperament, character and learning behaviors. Once the teacher intends to achieve a successful outcome, he or she should pay particular attention to specific tasks which help students learn more easily. The tasks usually are selected based on students' learning styles. In fact, there are four main types of learning styles:

- ✓ Visual learners
- ✓ Auditory learners
- ✓ Kinesthetic learners
- ✓ Reading/writing learners

These styles have been suggested by theory educationalist Neil Fleming in his VARK model of Student Learning. VARK is an acronym for Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic and Reading/Writing preference. One of the main ideas of VARK model is that it claims that students' behavior and learning are significantly influence by their preferred learning modes. Also, students' preferred learning modes should be appropriate to the learning strategies teachers apply during classes. These models help stimulate students' motivation, enhance their comprehension and enables metacognition.

Visual learning style is also known as "spatial" learning style. It is easy to recognize visual learners because these are the students who doodle information, make lists and take notes. They learn best when the information is presented visually. Teacher should use whiteboard and smartboards to teach a subject. They can ask their visual students to draw pictures or diagrams of the information they received during the lesson. In addition, these students may require some time to comprehend the texts as they are mostly drawn to the visual elements in the material rather than a set of words.

Auditory learners tend to repeat what teacher says and are good at expressing themselves verbally. They comprehend better when the material is presented with sound, so lectures have a crucial effect on learning of auditory learners. Teacher should ask as many questions as possible so that these students can understand the information by uttering them to public. Incorporating videos, music and audio lectures into teaching is one of the most effective methods that help auditory learners learn material efficiently.

Kinesthetic learners are sometimes referred to as tactile learners. These types of learners prefer touching things or moving while they learn new information. Teachers should make these students move by bringing games that involve movement. For example, they can arrange discussions where students in two groups should come to the board and brainstorm their ideas on the board. Also, students can be asked to role play the material they learned.

Reading/writing learners prefer learning materials through written words. They like to read books or articles, look up words in dictionaries, write diaries and search the internet about almost everything. Since traditional education system involves reading sources, doing

investigations and writing essays, it will not cause any noticeable challenges for teacher to teach the intended materials to reading/writing learners.

As was mentioned, these four preferred learning models should match learning strategies. The characteristics of learner strategies can be as follows: 1. through learning strategies students can become self-directed; 2. learning strategies expand the role of teachers; they are problem-oriented; they can be taught; they are flexible; they are influenced by many factors; they involve many aspects, besides the cognitive strategy.

O'Malley in 1985-1990 identified learning strategies and their characteristics. According to him, there are three strategies such as metacognitive, cognitive and socio-affective strategies.

Metacognitive strategy involves the following features:

- ✓ Evaluating one's own learning style and learning needs;
- ✓ Planning for an activity or an assignment;
- ✓ Monitoring progress;
- ✓ Evaluating the effectiveness of tools.

Cognitive strategy involves the characteristics presented below:

- ✓ Using resources and instructional tools;
- ✓ Note-taking;
- ✓ Repetition;
- ✓ Using imagery;
- ✓ Making guesses;
- ✓ Identifying key words.

Socio-affective strategy includes in itself the given features:

- ✓ Cooperating or sharing ideas;
- ✓ Clarifying information;
- ✓ Self-talk or motivation;
- ✓ Asking questions.

Specific tasks for EFL teaching classes fit into the particular learning strategy. For instance, "Think Aloud" is an activity that is most effective while using metacognitive strategy. That is, the teacher brings a text and prepares questions related to the text students are going to read. After students are introduced the questions, they read the part of the text and answer the questions. Based on students' responses teacher facilitates discussion in which students explain why they have certain answers.

Review guides are efficacious for implementing cognitive strategies since they involve imagery. The first step is that teacher introduces topic for a quiz or a test and assign students to create study guide on how to do the quiz or test. Students can create their guides independently or in groups and submit them to the teacher. For instance, students can draw a picture of a difficult word, design a map for processes. As an alternative to the picture, students can work out the ways how difficult words can be learnt easily.

"Think, Pair, Share" is another activity to use while applying socio-affective strategy. That is, teacher asks students to think about the topic independently and are then paired with another student to discuss this topic. After they both have spoken, teacher asks learners to find another partner and talk about the same topic. At the end of this activity, teacher tells students to share their partners' ideas to the whole class.

In conclusion, it should be noted that learning styles match learning strategies used in the classroom and that activities are carefully selected and adapted. In order to achieve the whole class learning, teachers should try to balance the incorporation of the suggested four learning styles and three relative learning strategies.

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