

## IMPORTANCE OF LEARNING STYLES IN TEACHING EFL

**Nafisa Khudayberganova Arslonbekovna,**  
“Tashkent Institute of Irrigation and  
Agricultural Mechanization Engineers”  
National Research University Teacher at  
“Teaching theory and methodology”  
department  
E-mail: [aslanovanafisa7@gmail.com](mailto:aslanovanafisa7@gmail.com)  
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**Annotation:** Learning styles play a prominent role in the learning process especially in a foreign language and may contribute significantly to the educational environment. Each learner has his or her preferred learning style that can show how he or she absorbs the information in the learning process. The most important side of learning styles is that teachers can easily incorporate with learners. Moreover, teachers may know how to teach their learners efficiently based on their learning styles. Learning styles are considered to be one of the general approaches used by learners to gain knowledge on subjects and help to solve new problems in the learning process.

**Key words:** learning styles, visual learning style, auditory learning style, kinesthetic learning style, senses, linguistic intelligence, word-related skills, problem-solving, logic, and math, visualizing and manipulating objects.

### Introduction

According to researches, the theory of learning styles commenced in the 1960s. There are different learning styles in the learning process. The most popular ones are visual, auditory, and kinesthetic in which learners may take information through their senses. Visual learners may learn visually by watching videos, pictures. Auditory learners may learn through listening or reading aloud. Kinesthetic learners may learn by doing or touching things.

If learners are not interested in the given materials, they may not learn them even in several years. It means teachers should be aware of their learners' learning styles and prepare materials according to learners' preferences. In this way, not only teachers but also learners can achieve the ultimate goal in the teaching and learning process. According to Cuaresma (2008, p.105), we as a teacher should help learners based on their preferences as much as possible.

For this Case study, young learners (6 female and 4 male students) are selected to find out which learning styles (visual, auditory, kinesthetic) may assist them easily to learn a foreign language. They all are the same age and class at school. The case study aims to find how young learners perceive input in the language learning process by using various materials. Sometimes using the same materials for all learners

cannot be productive because of their learning style. During the three-week teaching process, I observe my learners how they are learning, and finally concluded that each student has his or her learning style according to his or her behavior, personality, cognitive ability as well as interest.

Learning styles are defined by several scholars in multiple ways. Brown (2000, p.469) has claimed that the learning style is perceiving and processing information individually and utilizing them in the learning process. MacKeracher (2004, p.71) noted that “Learning style is defined as the characteristic of cognitive, affective, social, and physiological behaviors that serve as relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive, interact with, and respond to the learning environment”.

Keefe (1979, p.20) has specified the most relevant learning styles in which enhance and ease learners' acquiring process. The most common ones are field independent versus dependent (Witkin et al., 1971. p.20), as well as perceptual modality preferences (Price, Dunn & Dunn, 1978. p.20).

Keefe (1979, p.20) states that perceptual modality preferences are one of the cognitive processes that learners' have their preferred ways of absorbing information, and they perceive knowledge using their senses. There are several sensory modes in the learning process, namely visual, aural, kinesthetic, print, and interactive. Carbo (1983, p.470) investigated the perceptual styles of LL, and research found out that, good learners are those who learn through their visual and auditory modes of senses, while kinesthetic and tactile learning styles are preferred by poor language learners. According to Dunn and Dunn (1979, p.470), 30% of schoolchildren are considered to be auditory learners, 40% are visualizers, and 30% of school-age learners prefer kinesthetic or tactile learning styles.

Visual learners are those who perceive information by seeing. Additionally, the teacher's body language also may help them. Pictures, graphs, maps, images, and slides significantly contribute to understanding and perceiving knowledge. Visual learners should look, notice, and write to get the highest level in the learning process. (Dunn,1993: Zapalska and Dabb, 2002, p.21). Fatt (2000) states that learners who have visual learning preferences “... see the world by constructing and remembering mental pictures”. Fatt (2000) has pointed out that, visual learners may prefer reading, observing, and using visuals during the learning process. Coker (1996) has claimed while teaching visualizers, including demonstrations, pictures, and other visual aids

may decrease problems in inputting process. Learning by watching movies, images and graphs may improve to integrate the subject (Fatt, 2000).

Auditory learners are good at listening rather than other sensory modes. They may learn by listening to lectures, listening to music or podcasts, or talking with others. Dunn (1993, p.21) and Zapalska and Dabb (2002, p.21) have stated that during discussions individuals whose learning styles are auditory may recall information effectively when it is in spoken or audible forms. According to Fatt's (2000) perspective, auditory learners may have preferences in sounds and they may decide perfectly on what they have read or heard in the learning process. Besides, they would prefer lectures, discussions, and seminars which are mostly conducted in spoken form (Fatt, 2000).

Kinesthetic learners are those who can perceive knowledge through “a hands-on” approach such as touching, playing, and other physical activities. Dunn (1993, p.21) and Zapalska and Dabb (2002, p.21) have highlighted those individuals who are considered to be the kinesthetic types of learners may be good at physically involved activities in their learning process. Fatt's (2000) perspective indicates that people with a kinesthetic learning style prefer to acquire knowledge by doing as well as touching things.

Print modality preference is also one of the learning styles which may be chosen by learners. In this learning style, some language learners may prefer using printed reading materials, and perceive information by reading or writing. It means that while reading books or other materials, they use note-taking skills. Sometimes this learning style looks like a visual learning style.

Interactive modality may refer to people who are good at verbalization. During live sessions, these types of learners may acquire knowledge through asking, and answering questions. Talking with others, attending live discussions, discussing topics with others may enhance their knowledge rather than physical activities. Additionally, they work collaboratively, respect others' opinions while they are alone, they tend to talk to themselves by retelling what they read before.

The pre-test and post-test have indicated different results, as there has been a considerable growth in pupils' learning styles. The pre-test for visual learners showed that 4 learners answered 27 or 28 questions out of 32, which is the highest result, whereas others found 14 or 15 correct answers out of 32. In post-test, 31 or 30 answers were found by 5 learners, which means their learning style is visual. The pre-

test in the listening section indicated, one student found 5 answers out of 8 while others' answers were lower than 5. In the post-listening test result experienced 7 correct answers by 3 students whose preferred learning style is auditory.

For the kinesthetic learning style, I chose dialogue which learners may memorize it during role-playing. When I checked how many students' learning styles were kinesthetic at the beginning of the research, one of them was a kinesthetic learner. Then the number of kinesthetic learners increased, they were four students whose learning styles were kinesthetic, but the rest encountered difficulties during role play. The grammar test included 28 various elementary multiple questions. From my perspective, it was the most sophisticated test for them because none of them found 50 percent of total questions in both pre- and post-tests.

To conclude, 5 pupils, perceive language by visual materials, 3 students are considered to be auditory learners, and the number of kinesthetic learners equals 4 pupils.

### **Conclusion**

The case study demonstrates clearly that schoolchildren acquire language differently. The research was conducted to find out empirical evidence on how children perceive input either visually, audibly, or kinesthetically based on Keefe's theory. I would say that a three – weeks learning process impacted learners' input process positively. Additionally, this research is beneficial not only for me but also learners because they found their learning styles which will be helpful for them in their future studies. At the beginning of the research, one student was an auditory learner, 4 learners were visual learners, only one student was kinesthetic. But after the researcher, their learning styles changed significantly, including 5 learners preferred visual styles, 3 students were auditory, and four kinesthetic learners. Interestingly, both pre-and post-test results showed that none of them solved grammar tests properly. As a teacher, while preparing lesson materials for my learners, I may consider their learning styles as well as we can incorporate with them effectively in our lessons. The conclusion of the Case study is that the number of visual learners is higher than both auditory and kinesthetic learners. Participants found their preferable learning styles at the end of the research. Unfortunately, because of age as well as background knowledge, grammar test seemed to be sophisticated for them. I would like to recommend that every teacher should know

what his or her learner's learning style is as it may improve the learning and teaching process considerably.

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