Evolution of Learning Styles and Strategies: A Multimodal Pedagogy in an Age of Participatory Culture in English Classrooms

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Abstract

This paper mainly deals with the implementation of learning styles in the learning process to learn in different ways and their preferences in using different teaching resources as well. Laerning style is an individuals' natural or habitual pattern of acquiring and processing information in learning situations. In order to succeed in tomorrows' world/future the teachers should make the learners in need to critically evaluate, synthesize the volumes of information ascertained, response given creatively and innovatively in order to solve problems collaboratively and independently in the environment of participatory culture, with multiplying and increasingly competitive demands. Today the classroom is alive with the excitement of new learning methodologies. The important role of learning styles would be to increase self-awareness of the individual strengths and weakness of the students during the learning process.

We should agree on the fact that learning materials should not just reflect the teachers' style, but should be designed for all kinds of students and all kinds of learning styles. Students are able to learn and to efficiently improve their learning process with different methods. We humans have different ways of learning which can assimilate in a better way the knowledge received visually, kinaesthetically or through a certain sense. Thus the understanding of both students learning preferences and one's own teaching style gives us the chance to enhance.

Keywords

Learning Styles; Strategies; Multimodal pedagogy; Participatory Culture, English Language Learning.

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Introduction

Humans have different ways of learning. Some can assimilate in a better way the knowledge received visually, kinaesthetically or through a certain sense. In this sense, it is necessary to deploy resources to support the learning process in a way that it not only suits the characteristics of a few, but that it adapts to the characteristics of each student. In the context of information technology evolution and the availability of large number of electronic media, the idea of matching e-media with appropriate teaching and learning styles has been explored since the late 90's. There are many studies on the effectiveness of combining multimedia and hypermedia with learning styles in educational systems (Najjar). They attempt to associate specific e-media characteristics to different categories of learners and propose instruments and methods for assessing learning style (Riding & Rayner). The objective of the paper is to create teaching methods and environments that use the vast resources offered by IT in such a way to adapt teaching material and strategies to the learner's skills and learning style.

Electronic Media and Learning Styles

Very few researchers give an idea of which appropriate combinations of electronic media and learning styles are more effective than others. An electronic media can be used in different ways to implement different teaching strategies which can be matched with different learning styles. For example, a discussion forum can be used in different ways. It can be used to assign a practical task to students in such a way that students solve the assigned problem in a collective manner. This fits well with sensitive learning style. The discussion forum can also be used to give a sequential series of theoretical presentations to students who can interact with the teacher. The sequence of presentations associated with the corresponding discussion is an adequate teaching material for sequential style students. One crucial aspect of our research is the integration of electronic media with teaching strategies, because of the informational technology breakthroughs that allow us to use a variety of them. On the other hand, we need to link such teaching strategies with the concept of learning styles.

Teaching Strategy

Teaching strategies (TS) are the elements given to the students by the teachers to facilitate a deeper understanding of the information. The emphasis relies on the design, programming, elaboration and accomplishment of the learning content. Teaching strategies must be designed in a way that students are encouraged to observe, analyse, express an opinion, create a hypothesis, look for a solution and discover knowledge by themselves. Didactic teaching strategy for example refers to an organized and systematized sequence of activities and resources that teachers use while teaching. The main objective is to facilitate the students´ learning.

VAK: Multimodality

Learners use all three modalities to receive and learn new information and experiences. However, according to the VAK or modality theory, one or two of these receiving styles is normally dominant. This dominant style defines the best way for a person to learn new information by filtering what is to be learned. This style may not always to be the same for some tasks. The learner may prefer one style of learning for one task, and a combination of others for a different task. VAK above all is designed to be a starting place for a conversation among teachers and learners about learning. It can also be a catalyst for staff development - thinking about strategies for teaching different groups of learners can lead to more, and appropriate, variety of learning and teaching.

Visual Learning Style: The content must be a heavy on visual components. The requested homework must include actions to visualize, the information gathering must use visual representations, images must be used in order to make it easier for the students to remember the contents, and the teacher can request diagrams that summarize the homework.

Teaching Strategy: Simulations and games.

Electronic Media: Electronic Presentations, Videos (pedagogic), Animations

Auditory Learning Style: The content must be often talk to themselves. They also may move their lips and read out loud. They may have difficulty with reading and writing tasks. They often do better talking to a colleague or a tape recorder and hearing what was said.

Teaching Strategy: Socratic method and Brainstorming.

Electronic Media: Buzz Groups.

Kinaesthetic Learning Style: The content must be practical, courses must have an immediate connection with the real world, using concrete methods that are oriented towards facts and procedures that follow previously established techniques. The requested homework must be detailed, not global, including problem solving, laboratory exercises and concept memorization.

Teaching Strategy: Problem solving based learning and Practical Learning such as role playing.

Electronic Media: Forums and digital story telling.

The evaluation of student's learning style gives a strong insight about the students' ability to capture the teacher's message. Even if full personalization is not possible in face to face teaching, the teacher can develop different versions of the teaching material so that to fit to the learning styles of the largest number of students. It might happen that a teacher does not know the students' learning styles. Furthermore, he/she might not know either the appropriate educational strategies or instructional material for their courses.

Analysis of Learning Styles and Strategies

Language learning styles and strategies are among the main factors that help determine how –and how well – our students learn a second or foreign language. A second language is a language studied in a setting where that language is the main vehicle of everyday communication and where abundant input exists in that language. A foreign language is a language studied in an environment where it is not the primary vehicle for daily interaction and where input in that language is restricted.

Learning styles are the general approaches –for example, global or analytic, auditory or visual – that students use in acquiring a new language or in learning any other subject. These styles are "the overall patterns that give general direction to learning behavior". Learning style is the biologically and developmentally imposed set of characteristics that make the same teaching method wonderful for some and terrible for others. The above explores the following aspects of learning style: sensory preferences, personality types, desired degree of generality, and biological differences. Learning strategies are defined as "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" (Scarcella &

Oxford 63). When the learner consciously chooses strategies that fit his or her learning style and the L2task at hand, these strategies become a useful toolkit for active, conscious, and purposeful self-regulation of learning.

Learning strategies can be classified into six groups: cognitive, meta cognitive, memory-related, compensatory, affective, and social. If there is harmony between (a) the student (in terms of style and strategy preferences) and (b) the combination of instructional methodology and materials, then the student is likely to perform well, feel confident, and experience low anxiety. If clashes occur between (a) and (b), the student often performs poorly, feels unconfident, and experiences significant anxiety. Sometimes such clashes lead to serious breakdowns in teacher-student interaction. These conflicts may also lead to the dispirited student's outright rejection of the teaching methodology, the teacher, and the subject matter.

Transfer of Learning Strategies – allows the learner to apply the skills, knowledge, and/or attitudes that were learned in one situation to another learning situation in order to increase their speed of learning. In a new situation the transference of learning skills, influences prior learning on performance. If we did not transfer some of our skills or strategies used from prior learning, then each new learning situation would have to start from the beginning. In order to assist the learner with the transference of skills, it is important to raise learner awareness of the existing strategies they are currently using. However, before this stage is achieved the learner must be aware of their styles and be given opportunity to implement them in a supported environment. Ensuring they have the appropriate guidance and feedback to make use of these skills in future learning not only in an educational context, but also in a work based context. For example, incorporate the learner questionnaire from the "Analysis of What People Already Know". If this was completed independently by each learner, it could offer a learner insight into the patterns of learning behaviour they already use.

This tool identifies what strategies a learner is employing and helps to stimulate thought for the learner to further examine themselves. It exposes the learner to question themselves on how they learn and about their existing patterns of learning and strategies currently used.

Methodologies and Strategies Explained

Methodology is the way in which information is found, a process is undertaken or something is done to gain the information. A methodology is a documented method for performing activities in a logical, consistent, responsible and repetitive manner. Strategy is a series of actions a learner takes to assist the completion of a learning task.A strategy starts when the learner has analysed the task and identified his or her own strengths in order to carry that task out, this can be referred to as an action plan. The learner can then select, organize, observe, and evaluate the effectiveness of their actions and decide if the action plan needs adjustment.

Purpose of this Analysis

The purpose of this analysis is to continue the theme of the learning to learn competence discussed in the task based learning and teaching methodology which identifies and defines competences as a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes adapted for a specific context. The above-mentioned methodology, highlights to the individual that several learning models are common in the process of learning. And can be used to help students engage in existing learning behaviours and develop new ones. SKILLS will help to determine what methods and strategies were used by individuals in the past to learn and will also help to identify other strengths of current techniques used in the learning process. SKILLS will also build on existing techniques to enhance other learning methods. When you have an understanding of the methods currently used, this analysis will help you develop you're understanding of existing skills and introduce you to new useful ones.

Manipulative: Text Backwards

There are three key principles teachers of English language learners should use to help their students succeed in school.

1. Increase Comprehensibility - Use real objects, pictures, manipulatives, and experiments to be sure student understands concepts.

2. Increase Interaction - Use group activities such as Think/Pair/Share, Numbered Heads Together to involve all learners in discussions. (All students are involved in all questions/answers instead of calling on students with hands raised.)

3. Increase Thinking Skills - Involve all students in activities to use higher order thinking skills and problem solving to increase comprehension of content and skills. One strategy to do this is Teach the Text Backwards – doing an experiment first to establish vocabulary and generalizations or looking. These three principles can act as our road map as we integrate technology into our work with ELL students. Each principle contributes to the six C's depicted in the photo to the left. As 21st century learners we want all of our students to be involved with collaborating, creating, critical thinking, contributing, conversing and connecting.

Conclusion

The learning styles are presumed to be relatively stable learning patterns, consisting of processing strategies, learning approaches about learning. The learning styles are widely identified in literature and these styles are regularly identified in different ways and subject areas. However, the learning is an extremely complicated phenomenon in which a great number of factors are interrelated. In fact, it is no use to ask the question "What is the most important factor that influences learning?". The teacher cannot have influence on students' personal presage factors. By using the VARK Model and

questionnaire the learners learning style or preferences can be determined. This can then assist both the learner and educator in identifying individual student preferences in the manner in which information is presented and absorbed.

As educators, we need to consider and recognize how to reach all learners by understanding how to present information in many forms. Learners can be helped more effectively, both in class and out, if educators and learners are aware of their learning style and preferences before attempting to teach or learn a new skill. As a learner, it is vital to be self-aware of learning preferences in order to adjust study techniques to best fit each individual, even when the information and instruction provided does not match the preferred style.
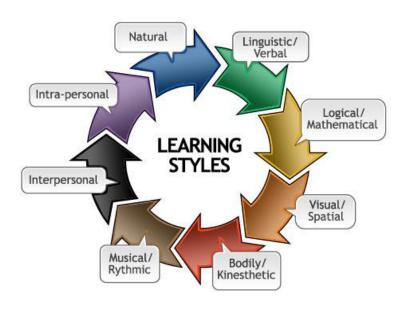

Fig.1 Multi Learning Styles

Fig.1.1.Key Principles in English Teaching

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